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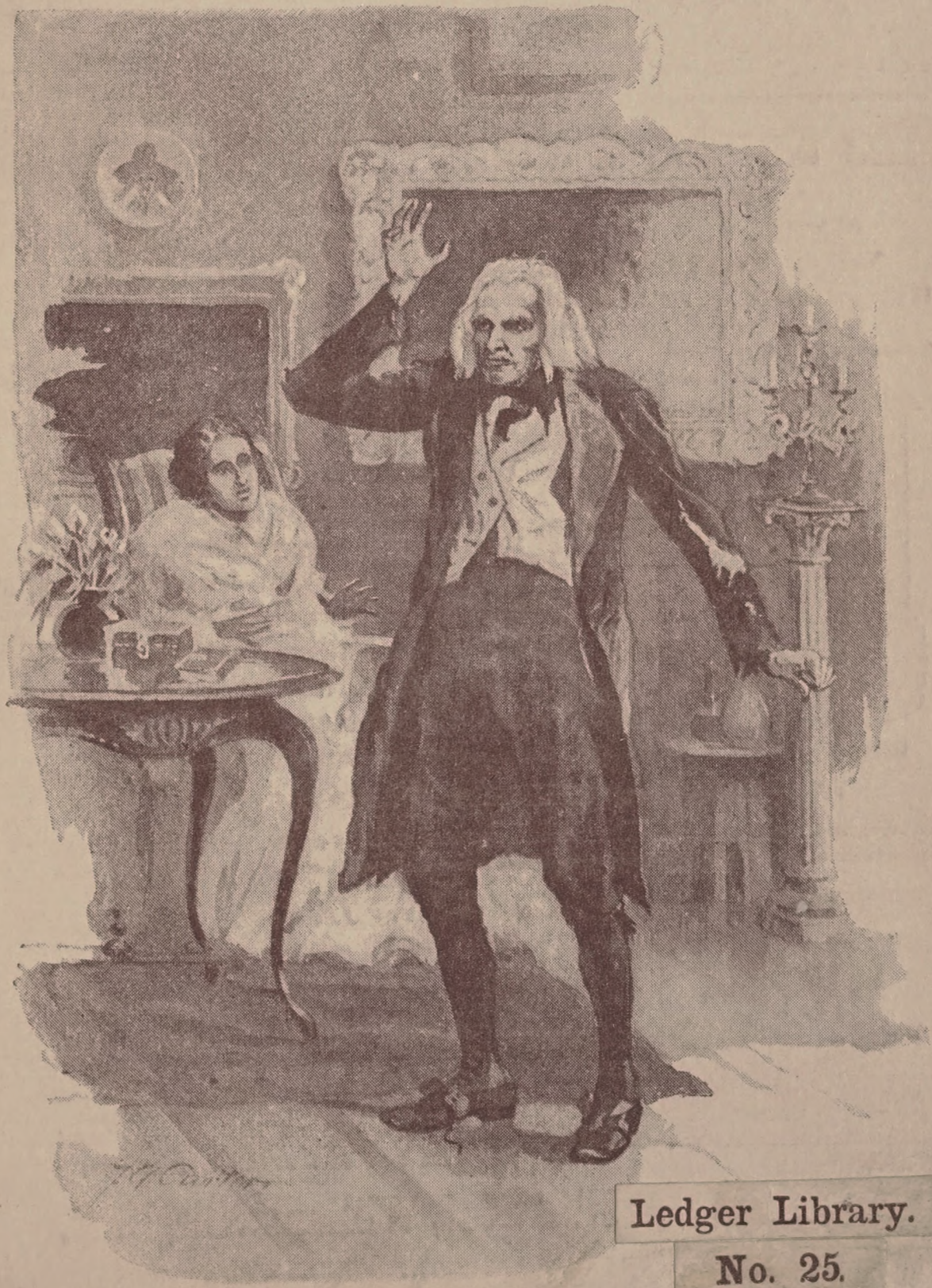

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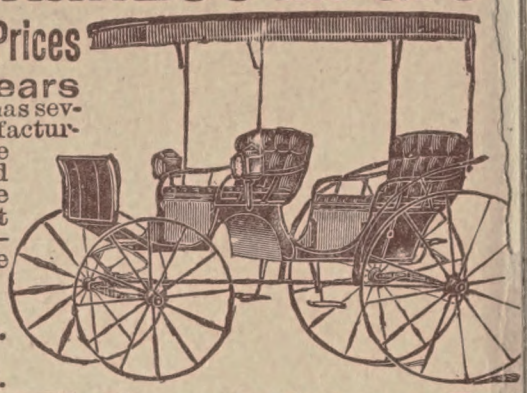

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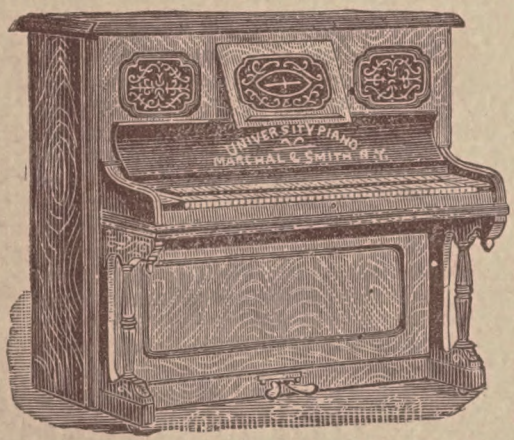

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THE ALCHEMIST.

THE ALCHEMIST.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

HONORE DE BALZAC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. A. CARTER.

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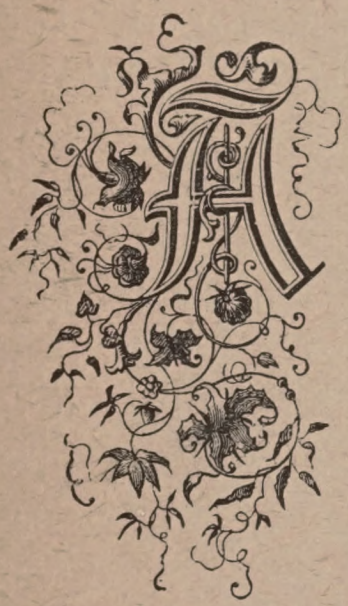
THE ALCHEMIST.



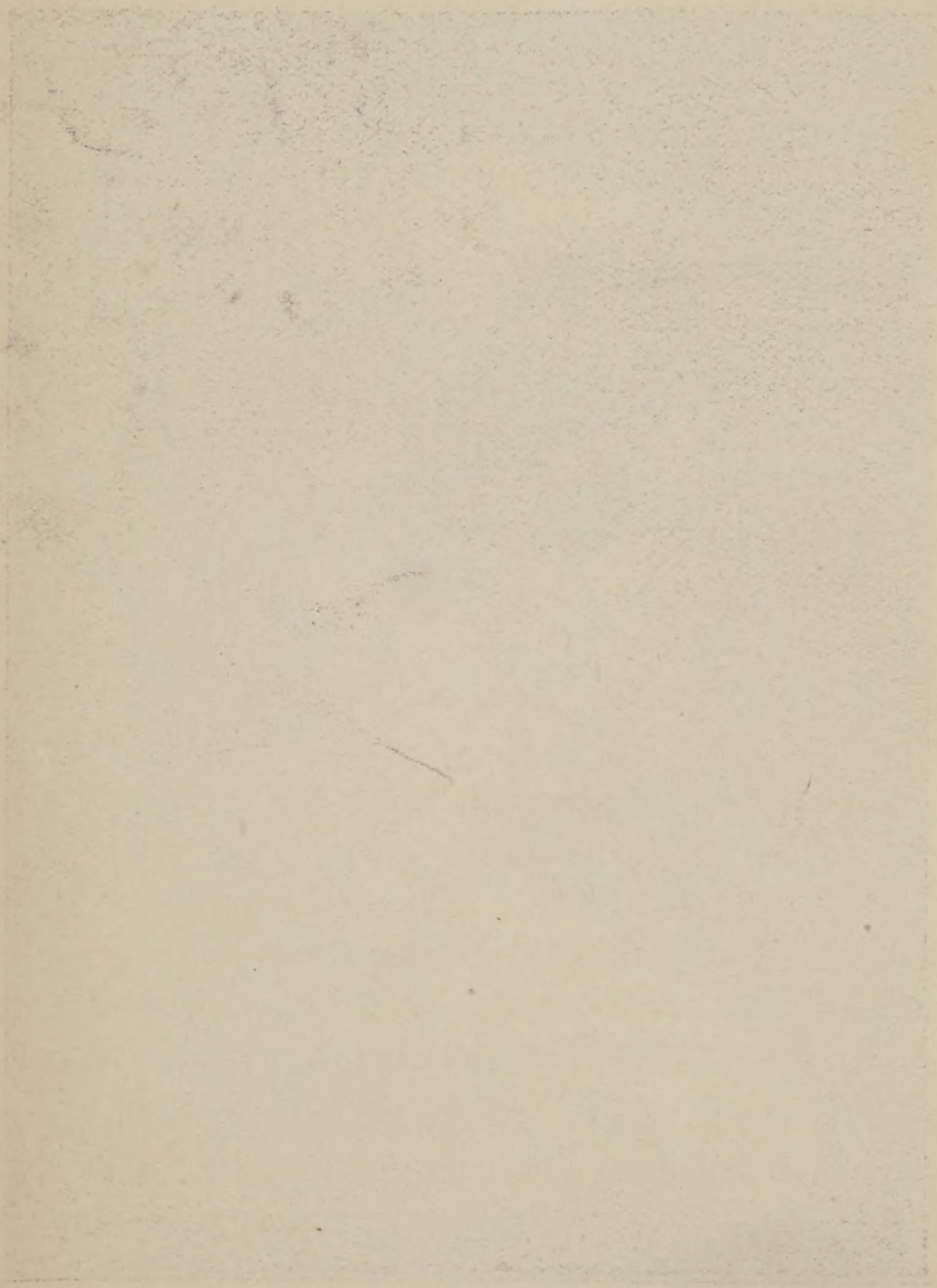
T Douay, in the Rue de Paris, stands a house the external appearance and domestic arrangements of which have preserved, more than those of any other dwelling, the character of the old Flemish architecture,—a style admirably adapted to the patriarchal manners of that excellent country. But before describing this mansion, we ought, perhaps, to establish, in the interest of authors, the necessity of those didactic preparations against which a certain class of readers protest—a class of ignorant and voracious persons who expect emotions without passing through the generating principle, who ask for the flower without the seed, the fruit without the growth. Can Art be expected to be more potent than Nature?

The events of human life, whether public or

private, are so intimately connected with architecture, that most observers can reconstruct nations or individuals, in all their lineaments, from the remains of their public monuments or by examining their domestic relics. Archeology is to social nature what comparative anatomy is to organized nature. A mosaic reveals a whole state of society, as a skeleton of the ichthyosaurus implies a whole creation. In either case, the deduction is complete and the concatenation perfect. The cause reveals the effect, as every effect enables us to ascend to the cause. The sage thus raises the old ages from the dead, perfect even in their blemishes. Hence, doubtless, the intense interest inspired by an architectural description, when the fancy of the writer does not distort the elements of which it is composed. Every one is able, with a rigid system of deduction, to link such a description with the past, and, in human life, the past singularly resembles the future. To recount to man what was, is almost always telling him what will be. In short, the description of places where life is spent generally recalls to every one either his disappointments or his budding hopes. The comparison between the present that deceives our secret wishes and the future that may realize them, is an inexhaustible source of melancholy or of placid joy.

For this reason, it is almost impossible to avoid being touched by a picture of Flemish life, when the accessories are well rendered. And why? It

MARGARET.



is, perhaps, because Flemish life of all others most conclusively settles man's uncertainties. We do not mean to say that it dispenses with holidays and with family ties; or that it does not enjoy a sumptuous ease that attests an enduring comfort, or a repose that resembles felicity: but it expresses in an especial manner the monotony and calm of a purely sensuous happiness wherein enjoyment stifles desire by always anticipating it. Whatever value an impassioned man may attach to the agitations of the sentiments, he never views without emotion the phases of a social state in which the beating of the heart is so well regulated that superficial people complain of its coldness. The crowd generally prefers the force that bursts its banks to the force that flows in a persistent stream. They have neither time nor patience to measure the power that lies concealed beneath an unvarying exterior. In order, then, to make an impression upon the crowd that is carried away by the current of life, passion, like a great artist, has no other resource than to go beyond the mark, like Michael Angelo, Bianca Capello, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Beethoven and Paganini. The deeply calculating alone think it never judicious to pass beyond the mark, and have respect only for the virtuality manifested in a perfect accomplishment, which puts into every work that profound calm so captivating to superior men. Now, the life adopted by this essentially economic people entirely fulfils the conditions of felicity

imagined by the masses as characteristic of the life of citizens and burghers.

The most exquisite materiality is stamped upon all the habits of the Flemings. What is called English comfort is dry and hard in its tone; whilst in Flanders the old domestic interior rejoices the eye with soothing colors, with a true simplicity: it implies work without fatigue; the pipe denotes a happy application of the Neapolitan *far-niente;* and it argues a placid sentiment of art, combined with patience, its most necessary condition, and conscience, the element that renders its creations durable. The Flemish character is expressed by these two words, patience and conscience, which seem to exclude the rich shades of poetry and to make the manners of the country as flat as its wide plains, and as cold as its foggy skies. Nevertheless it is not so. Civilization has there exhibited its power, by modifying everything, even the effects of climate. If we attentively observe the products of different countries of the world, we are at first surprised to see gray and dull colors especially assigned to the products of the temperate zone, whilst the most brilliant hues mark those of warm countries. Manners must necessarily be in harmony with this law of nature. The Flemings, who were formerly essentially sombre and devoted to neutral tints, have learned the art of throwing splendor into their smoky atmosphere from the political vicissitudes that have successively subjected them to the Burgundians, the Spanish, and the

French, and have made them fraternize with the Germans and the Dutch. From Spain they have imbibed a taste for the luxury of scarlets, brilliant satins, bright tapestries, plumes, guitars, and the forms of courtesy. From Venice they have received, in exchange for their linens and laces, those fantastic glasses wherein wine acquires a new splendor to the eye and seems better to the taste. From Austria they have derived an acquaintance with that heavy diplomacy which, according to a popular saying, takes three steps in a bushel basket. Commerce with the Indies has brought them the grotesque inventions of China and the wonders of Japan. Nevertheless, in spite of their patience in collecting everything, in returning nothing, in enduring all things, the Flemings could be regarded as little else than the general store-house of Europe, till the moment when the discovery of tobacco soldered together in smoke the scattered features of their national physiognomy. Henceforth, in spite of the parcelling out of their territory the Flemish people existed by pipe and pot.

After having assimilated, by the constant economy of its conduct, the riches and the ideas of its masters or its neighbors, this country, by nature so dull and destitute of poetry, shaped for itself a new life and characteristic manners, without seeming to have been infected with servility. Art there lost all ideality and its sole product was Form. So do not look in this country for plastic poetry, seek neither the

vivacity of comedy nor dramatic action, neither the bold flights of the epic or the ode, nor the genius of music; but it is fruitful in discoveries, in learned discussions that require both time and the lamp. Everything bears the stamp of temporal enjoyment. The Fleming sees exclusively what is, his thought is bent so scrupulously to serving the needs of life, that in no labor does it take a flight beyond the visible world. The sole idea of the future conceived by this people was a sort of economy in politics, their revolutionary force sprang from a domestic desire to have elbow-room at table and complete ease beneath their awnings. The sentiment of comfort, that spirit of independence inspired by fortune, begot there, more than elsewhere, that need of liberty which subsequently agitated Europe. So the constancy of their ideas, and the tenacity given by education to the Flemings, made them in former times men redoubtable in defense of their rights. Among these people nothing is done by halves, neither the building of houses, nor the making of furniture, nor the digging of ditches, nor the cultivation of the soil, nor the conduct of a revolt. They hold the monopoly, too, of what they undertake. The manufacture of lace and the production of their linen, a work requiring patient agriculture and more patient industry, are hereditary like their family fortunes. If it were necessary to paint constancy under the purest human form, we could not do better perhaps than to take the portrait of a good burgomaster of

the Netherlands, capable, as many examples prove, of dying like a bourgeois and without glory, for the benefit of his Hanse. But the sweet poetry of this patriarchal life will naturally be found in the picture of one of the last of these houses which, at the time when this history begins, still preserved their character at Douay.

Of all the cities of the department of the Nord, Douay is, alas! the one most modernized, where innovation has made the most rapid conquests, where the love of social progress is most diffused. The old buildings are disappearing day by day, the antique manners are rapidly passing away. The taste, the fashions and the manners of Paris prevail there; and the Douaysians will soon have nothing of the ancient Flemish life left but the cordiality of its hospitality, its Spanish courtesy, the wealth and the neatness of Holland. White-stone mansions will have taken the place of houses of red brick. The ample opulence of Batavian forms will have given way before the fleeting elegance of new French fashions.

The house in which the events of this history took place may be found near the middle of the rue de Paris, and has borne at Douay, for more than two hundred years, the name of the House of Claes. The Van Claeses were formerly one of the most celebrated of those families of artizans, to which the Netherlands owed that commercial supremacy, in several products, which they have preserved to the

present hour. For a long time, the Claeses in the city of Ghent were the chiefs of the powerful guild of weavers. At the time of the revolt of this great city against Charles V, who wished to abrogate its privileges, the richest of the Claeses was so deeply compromised that, foreseeing a catastrophe and forced to share the lot of his companions, he secretly sent his wife, his children and his riches to France, before the emperor's troops had invested the city. The apprehensions of this syndic of the weavers were not without foundation. He, as well as several other citizens, was deprived of the right of capitulation and hung as a rebel, whilst he was in reality the defender of the independence of Ghent. The death of Claes and his companions bore its fruits. Subsequently these useless executions cost the King of Spain the greater part of his possessions in the Netherlands. Of all seeds confided to the earth the blood of martyrs bears the speediest harvest. When Philip II, who punished revolt even to the second generation, extended his iron scepter over Douay, the Claeses preserved their immense property by an alliance with the very noble family of Molina, the elder branch of which, then poor, became rich enough to purchase the earldom of Nourho, of which it held only the title, in the kingdom of Leon.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after vicissitudes of too little interest to be recounted here, the family of Claes was represented, in the branch established at Douay, by Balthazar Claes-

Molina, Count of Nourho, who preferred, however, to go by the simple name of Balthazar Claes. Of the immense fortune amassed by his ancestors, who had worked fully a thousand looms, there remained to Balthazar an income of about fifteen thousand francs a year, from ground rents, in the town of Douay, and the house on the rue de Paris, the furniture of which alone was worth a fortune. As to the property in the kingdom of Leon, it had been the subject of litigation between the Molinas of Flanders and that branch of the family which remained in Spain. The Molinas of Leon gained the domains and assumed the title of counts of Nourho, although the Claeses alone had the right to bear it; but the vanity of the Belgian bourgeoisie was superior to the Castilian pride. So, when the civil state was established, Balthazar Claes laid aside the tatters of his Spanish nobility for his grand distinction among the citizens of Ghent.

The feeling of patriotism is so strong among exiled families, that till the very close of the eighteenth century, the Claeses had remained faithful to their traditions, to their manners and customs. They intermarried with none but families of the purest bourgeoisie; they required a certain number of aldermen and burgomasters on the side of the bride in order to admit her into their family. In short, they sought wives at Bruges or Ghent, at Liege or in Holland, for the purpose of perpetuating the customs of their domestic hearth. Towards the close

of the last century, their circle of acquaintances, which had been growing narrower and narrower, was limited to seven or eight families of municipal nobility, whose customs, whose voluminous togas, whose half-Spanish magisterial dignity, were quite in harmony with their habits. The inhabitants of the city felt for this family a sort of religious respect, which amounted to more than a strong prepossession. The unfailing honesty, the spotless loyalty of the Claeses, their invariable decorum, made the people of the place regard them with a superstition as inveterate as that felt for the feast-day of a local saint, and well expressed in the single phrase—"the Claes family." The whole spirit of ancient Flanders was concentrated in their mansion, which offered amateurs of antiquities the type of the modest dwellings built by the wealthy burghers in the Middle Ages.

The principal ornament of the facade was a double-door in oak, embellished with nails arranged in the form of a V, in the centre of which the Claeses had complacently carved two shuttles leashed together. The door-way, which was built of sand-stone, terminated in a pointed arch that supported a small lantern surmounted by a wooden cross, and enclosing a statuette of Saint Genevieve clasping her distaff. Although time had thrown its color over the delicate work of this door and lantern, yet the extreme care bestowed upon it by the occupants of the house enabled the passers-by to

appreciate all the details. The casements, composed of grouped columns, preserved a dark-gray color and were so brilliant that one would have supposed they had been varnished. At the sides of the door were two windows, on the ground-floor, similar to all the rest in the house. The white-stone frames of these windows terminated below in a richly ornamented shell, above in two arcades separated from each other by the upright portion of the cross which divided the sash into four unequal parts, for the bar placed at the desired altitude to represent a cross, gave to the two lower sides of the window a dimension almost double that of the upper parts which were rounded off by their arches. This double arcade was ornamented by three tiers of bricks overlapping each other, and so laid that each alternate brick projected or receded about an inch, saw-fashion. The panes of glass, small and lozenge-shaped, were set in iron frames, which were extremely delicate and painted red. The walls, built of brick laid with white mortar, were supported at intervals by stone ties. There were five windows in the first story; only three in the second, while the attic was lighted by a large round opening in five compartments, bordered with sand-stone, and placed in the middle of the triangular frieze described by the gable, like the rose in the portal of a cathedral. At the apex of the gable stood, like a weather-cock, a distaff bound with flax. The two sides of the great triangle formed by the wall of the

gable were cut off square by a sort of steps to the crown of the first story, where, on the right and left of the house, fell the rain water, ejected from the mouth of a fantastic animal. At the foot of the house a layer of sand-stone resembled a stepping-stone. As a last vestige of ancient customs, on each side of the door, between the two windows, was a wooden trap strengthened by bars of iron, by which admittance was gained to the cellars.

From the day of its erection, the facade was carefully cleaned twice a year. Did the smallest morsel of mortar escape from a joint, the hole was filled up immediately. The windows, the supports, the stones, —all were dusted more carefully than the most precious statues are dusted in Paris. This house-front, therefore, presented no traces of decay. In spite of the deep colors due to the very age of the brick, it was as well preserved as an old picture or the old cherished book of an amateur, which would always remain new if they did not undergo, beneath the blistering power of our atmosphere, the influence of gases the noxiousness of which threatens even ourselves. The cloudy sky, the humid climate of Flanders, and the shadows caused by the narrowness of the streets, very often removed from this building the lustre which it owed to its extreme cleanliness, and which, besides, rendered it cold and sombre to the eye. A poet would have liked some vegetation in the openings of the lantern, or some mosses in the chinks of the sand-stone; he would

have desired some cracks in the rows of bricks; or would have asked that under the arcades of the windows some swallow might have built her nest in the triple red cells which adorned them. Thus the finish, the extremely clean appearance of this facade, half rubbed away by friction, gave it a coldly respectable and decently worthy aspect, which certainly would have driven away any romantic youth who might have taken up his lodgings opposite to it. When a visitor had pulled the twisted-wire bell-cord that hung down the door frame, and a servant from within had opened one of the leaves, in the middle of which was a small wicket, this leaf immediately escaped from his hand, carried by its weight, and fell back, making, beneath the arches of a spacious paved passage-way, and in the depths of the house, a loud, dull sound, as if the door had been of bronze. This passage-way, painted like marble, always fresh, and covered with a sprinkling of fine sand, led to a large, square, interior court, paved in large varnished squares of a greenish color. On the left were the linen-room, the kitchens, the servants' hall; on the right were the wood-house, the coal-magazine, and the offices, the doors, windows, and walls of which were ornamented with designs that were kept exquisitely neat. The light, passing between four walls of red striped with white, contracted rosy reflections and hues which lent to the human face and to the least details a mysterious grace and fantastic appearance.

A second house, exactly similar to the building standing on the street, and which, in Flanders, bears the name of the *back-quarter*, stood at the end of this court, and was used exclusively as the residence of the family. On the ground floor the first apartment was a parlor, lighted by two windows opening on the court, and by two others looking into a garden exactly as wide as the house. Two parallel glass doors led, one into the garden, and the other into the court, and corresponded with the street-door, so that a stranger, on entering, could take in at a glance the whole of the house, and see even the foliage which tapestried the depths of the garden. The front house, intended for receptions, the second story of which contained apartments for strangers, certainly exhibited objects of art and great accumulated wealth; but nothing, in the eyes of a Claes, or in the judgment of a connoisseur, could equal the treasures which ornamented the room in which, for two centuries, the life of the family had been passed. The Claes who died for the cause of Ghentish liberty—the artizan of whom too mean an idea would be formed if the historian omitted to state that he possessed nearly forty thousand silver marks, earned in the manufacture of the sails required by the all-powerful Venetian navy—this Claes had a friend in the celebrated wood carver, Van Huysium of Bruges. Many times had the artist dipped into the purse of the artizan. A little while before the revolt of Ghent, Van Huysium, then rich, had secretly

carved for his friend a piece of woodwork, in massive ebony, in which were represented the principal scenes of the life of Artevelde, the brewer who had been for an hour king of Flanders. This, composed of sixty panels, contained about fourteen hundred principal personages, and was esteemed the masterpiece of Van Huysium. The captain charged with the custody of the citizens whom Charles V. had decided to hang on the day of his entrance into his native city, offered, it is said, to allow Van Claes to escape, if he would give him this work of Van Huysium's; but the weaver had sent it to France. The parlor, entirely wainscoted with these panels, which, out of respect for the manes of the martyr, Van Huysium himself came to frame in wood painted in ultramarine striped with gold, is the most complete work of this master, whose smallest productions are now worth almost their weight in gold.

Above the mantelpiece, Van Claes, painted by Titian, in his costume of president of the tribunal of the Parchons, seemed still to reign over this family, which venerated him as its most illustrious man. The chimney-piece, primitively of stone, with a high mantelshelf, had been reconstructed in white marble, in the last century, and supported an old time-piece, and two candlesticks with five twisted branches each, in very bad taste, but of massive silver. The four windows were hung with large curtains of red damask, with black flowers, lined with white silk,

and the furniture, which was of the same stuff, had been renewed under Louis XIV. The floor, evidently modern, was composed of large slabs of white-wood, framed in strips of oak. The ceiling, formed of several panels, at the centre of which was a grotesque mask, carved by Van Huysium, had been respected, and preserved its brown tints of Holland oak. At the four corners of this parlor, stood truncated columns, surmounted by candlesticks similar to those on the mantelpiece; a round table occupied the centre. Along the walls card tables were symmetrically arranged. Upon two gilded consoles with marble tops, were placed, at the period when our history commences, two glass globes filled with water, in which, over a bed of sand and shells, swam red, gold and silver fish. This apartment was at once brilliant and gloomy. The ceiling necessarily absorbed the light, without reflecting any. Though there was plenty of light on the garden side, though it fell twinkling on the carvings of the ebony, the windows towards the court yielded scarcely enough to bring out the strips of gold on the wall opposite. This parlor, then, so magnificent on a fine day, was generally filled with such soft tints and red and melancholy tones as the sun sheds on the tops of the forests in autumn. It is useless to continue the description of the House of Claes, in other parts of which many of the scenes of this history will necessarily take place; it is sufficient, at present, to have a knowledge of its general arrangement.

In 1812, towards the close of the month of August, on a Sunday, after vespers, a woman was seated in her arm-chair at one of the garden windows. The rays of the sun fell obliquely upon the house, taking it, as it were, in flank, crossed the parlor, expired in grotesque reflections upon the wainscot that tapestried the walls on the side towards the court, and enveloped this woman in the purple zone projected by the damask curtain draped down the window. Even an ordinary painter, who at this moment might have copied this woman, would certainly have produced a striking work, with a head so expressive of grief and melancholy. The attitude of the body, and that of the feet, which were thrown forward, indicated the dejection of a person who has lost the consciousness of her physical being in the concentration of her faculties, absorbed by one fixed thought; she was following its radiation into the future, as we often, on the seashore, look at a ray of the sun which pierces the clouds and describes a luminous track towards the horizon. Her hands, thrown back by the arms of the easy chair, hung down on each side, and her head, as if too heavy, rested on the back. A very ample dress of white cambric muslin rendered it difficult to judge of her size and form, while her bust was concealed beneath the folds of a scarf, crossed over her bosom and negligently tied. Even if the light had not thrown her countenance into relief, which it seemed to do in preference to the rest of her person, it would have

been impossible at that moment not to have been attracted by the face exclusively; its expression, which would have struck the most careless child, was a persistent, cold stupefaction, in spite of a few scalding tears.

Nothing is more terrible to behold than that extreme grief which overflows only at rare intervals, but the traces of which remained upon her face like lava congealed around a volcano. One would have called her a dying mother, obliged to leave her children in a gulf of misery, without the power of bequeathing them any human protection. The physiognomy of this lady, who was about forty years of age, but then much nearer beauty than she had ever been in her youth, exhibited none of the characteristics of a Flemish woman. A thick mass of black hair fell in curls down her cheeks upon her shoulders. Her brow, very prominent, and narrow at the temples, was inclined to yellow, but beneath that brow sparkled two black eyes which emitted fire. Her countenance, which was quite Spanish, brown in tone and with very little color, and was ravaged by the small-pox, arrested attention by the perfection of its oval form, the contours of which preserved, in spite of the alterations of the lines, a finish of majestic elegance, which sometimes wholly reappeared when any effort of the mind restored to it its primitive purity. The most marked feature of this masculine countenance was a nose curved like the beak of an eagle, and which, too prominent

towards the middle, appeared to be ill-formed within; but there was in it an indescribable elegance; the division between the nostrils was so thin that its transparency allowed the light to tinge it strongly. Although the large and well-curved lips bespoke the pride inspired by high birth, they were stamped with a natural goodness, and breathed politeness. The beauty of this face, at once vigorous and feminine, might have been contested, but it commanded attention. Short, hump-backed, and lame, this woman remained the longer single because people persisted in denying her intelligence; nevertheless, there had been many men who were strongly moved by the passionate ardor expressed by her head, and by the evidences of inexhaustible tenderness, and who remained bound by a spell irreconcilable with so many defects. She very much resembled her great grandfather, the duke of Casa Real, a grandee of Spain.

At this moment, the charm which had formerly taken such despotic hold on poetical hearts, beamed around her face more powerfully than at any period of her past life, and exercised itself, thus to speak, in air, by expressing a fascinating will, omnipotent over men, but without power over destiny. When her eyes wandered from the glass globe in which she had looked at the fishes without seeing them, she raised them, with a movement of despair, as if to invoke Heaven. Her sufferings were of that kind which can be confided to none but God. The

silence was broken by nothing but by the chirping of crickets and grasshoppers in the little garden from which streamed an oven-like heat, and by the dull reverberation of silver, plates and chairs in the room contiguous to the parlor, where a servant was laying the cloth for dinner. At this moment, the afflicted lady listened and appeared to collect herself; she took out her handkerchief, wiped away her tears, endeavored to smile, and succeeded so well in effacing the expression of grief engraven on all her features, that she might have been thought in that state of indifference in which we are left by a life exempt from cares. Whether the habit of living in this house to which her infirmities confined her, had enabled her to discover in it natural effects imperceptible to others, and which persons that are a prey to extreme feelings eagerly seek, or whether nature had compensated for so many physical defects by giving her more delicate sensations than to beings in appearance more happily organized, this woman had heard the step of a man in a gallery built over the kitchens and offices, and by which the house in front communicated with the house in the rear.

The sound of steps became more and more distinct. Soon, even a stranger, not possessed of the power with which a passionate creature, like this woman, often succeeds in annihilating space to unite with another self, might have easily heard the steps of this man on the stairs by which persons descended from the gallery into the parlor. At the sound of

these steps the attention of the most indifferent would have been riveted, for it was impossible to hear them unmoved. A precipitate or an unequal step alarms us. When a man springs up and cries "Fire!" his feet speak as loudly as his voice. If such be the case, an opposite kind of step should cause no less powerful emotions. The grave solemnity, the dragging step of this man might, without doubt, have made unreflecting people impatient; but an observer or a nervous person would have experienced a feeling akin to terror at the measured tread of feet, from which life appeared absent, and which made the floor creak as if two iron weights had struck them alternately. You might have recognized the heavy and undecided step of an old man, or the majestic walk of a thinker, who carries worlds about with him. When he had descended the last step, planting his feet on the pavement with hesitating action, he remained an instant on the landing from which the passage led to the servants' hall, and from which there was also an entrance to the parlor by a door concealed in the woodwork, like that which opened into the dining-room.

At this moment a slight trembling, comparable to the sensation caused by an electric spark, agitated the woman seated in the arm-chair; but the softest smile at the same time animated her lips, and her countenance, moved by the expectation of pleasure, was resplendent as that of a beautiful Italian madonna; she found strength suddenly to drive her

terrors down to the depths of her heart, then turned her head towards the panels of the door, which was about to open in the angle of the parlor, and was, in fact, pushed with such violence that the poor creature seemed to receive a shock from it.

Balthaza Claes came in abruptly, advanced a few paces, did not look at the woman, or if he did look at her, did not see her, and stood upright in the middle of the parlor, supporting his head, which was slightly inclined, upon his right hand. A horrible anguish, to which this woman could not accustom herself, although it returned frequently every day, clutched at her heart, dissipated her smile, and contracted her brown forehead between the eyebrows towards that line furrowed by the frequent expression of painful feelings; her eyes filled with tears, but she dried them quickly, looking at Balthazar.

It was impossible not to be powerfully struck by the appearance of this head of the Claes family. When young, he must have resembled the sublime martyr who threatened Charles V. with a revival of Artevelde; but at this moment he appeared more than sixty years of age, although he was not over fifty, and his premature old age had destroyed any such noble resemblance. His lofty figure was a little bent, either from his labors obliging him to stoop, or from the spinal column becoming curved with the weight of his head. He had a broad chest and a square bust, but the lower portions of his body were lank, although nervous; and this discord in an

organization, evidently perfect once, puzzled the mind that endeavored to explain by some singularity in his life, the reasons of this fantastic form. His abundant white hair, ill cared for, fell upon his shoulders in the German fashion, but in a disorder harmonizing with the general neglect of his person. His large forehead presented the protuberances in which Gall has placed the poetical world. His eyes, of a clear, rich blue, had that keen vivacity which is remarked among seekers of occult causes. His nose, doubtless once perfect, had become elongated, and the nostrils seemed to open gradually more and more, by an involuntary tension of the olfactory muscles. His shaggy cheek-bones were very prominent, and for this reason his already withered cheeks appeared all the more hollow; his graceful mouth was closed in between his nose and a short, sharply prominent chin. The form of his face was, however, rather long than oval; so that the scientific system which attributes to every human countenance a resemblance to the face of an animal, might have found an additional proof in that of Balthazar Claes, which might have been compared to the head of a horse. His skin clung to his bones as if some secret fire was continually parching it; and when at intervals he gazed into space, as if to find there the realization of his hopes, one would have said that he breathed from his nostrils the flame which devoured his soul.

The profound feelings that animate great men

breathed in that pale face so deeply furrowed with wrinkles, upon that brow contracted like that of an old care-worn king, but, above all, in those sparkling eyes, the fire of which appeared equally increased by the chastity enforced by the tyranny of an idea, and by the internal heat of a vast intellect. His eyes, deeply buried in their sockets, appeared to have become sunken solely by sleepless nights and the terrible reactions of a hope always deceived, always reviving. The jealous fanaticism which art and science inspire, betrayed itself still further in this man by a singular and constant distraction, of which his appearance and behavior gave evidence, in accordance with the magnificent monstrosity of his physiognomy. His large hairy hands were dirty, his long nails had deep black lines at their extremities. His shoes were either not cleaned, or wanted strings. Of all his household, the master alone could allow himself the strange license of being so untidy. His soiled black cloth trousers, his unbuttoned waistcoat, his cravat put on a-wry, and his green coat, always ripped, completed a fantastic ensemble of little things and great things, which, in another person, would have revealed the misery engendered by vice, but in Balthazar Claes was merely the neglect of genius. Too frequently vice and genius produce the same effects and the vulgar mistake one for the other. Is not genius a constant excess which devours time, money, and the body, and leads to the hospital more rapidly than evil

passions? Men even appear to have less respect for genius than for vice, for they refuse to trust it. It would seem that the benefits of the secret labors of the savant are considered such a long way off, that society declines having any pecuniary relations with him during his lifetime, and prefers settling its account by neither pardoning his wants nor his misfortunes.

In spite of his continual forgetfulness of the present, if Balthazar Claes quitted for a moment his mysterious contemplations, if some kindly and social intention reanimated that pensive countenance, if his fixed eyes lost their rigid state to express a human feeling, if he looked around him on returning to real and common life, it was difficult not to render involuntary homage to the seductive beauty of that face, to the gracious spirit that beamed in it. Thus every one, on seeing him at such a time, regretted that he no longer belonged to the world, saying, "He must have been very handsome in his youth!" A vulgar error! Never had Balthazar Claes been more poetic than he was at this moment. Lavater would have been delighted to study that head, so expressive of patience, Flemish loyalty, and candid morality, in which everything was broad and grand, in which passion seemed calm because it was strong. The morals of this man must have been pure, his word was sacred, his friendship appeared undeviating, his devotion, in case of need, would have been complete. But the will which employs these qualities in behalf

of one's country, of the world, or of one's family, was fatally turned in another direction. This citizen, under obligations to watch over the welfare of a household, to economize a fortune, to guide his children towards a happy future, lived beyond the pale of his duties and affections, in association with some familiar genius. To a priest he would have appeared full of the word of God; an artist would have saluted him as a great master; an enthusiast would have taken him for a seer of the Swedenborgian church.

At this moment, the dilapidated, mean, neglected costume which this man wore, contrasted singularly with the tasteful dress of the woman who so painfully admired him. Deformed persons, who possess intellect or a lofty soul, generally display great taste in their toilet. They either dress simply, perceiving that their sole charm must be moral, or they succeed in obliterating the defects of their form by a sort of elegance in the details which diverts the eye, and occupies the mind. Not only had this woman a generous soul, but, still further, she loved Balthazar Claes with that instinct of woman which gives a foretaste of the intelligence of angels. Brought up in one of the most illustrious families of Belgium, she would have acquired taste if she had not been born with it; but enlightened by the desire of constantly pleasing the man she loved, she knew how to dress becomingly, without allowing her elegance to clash with her two defects of conformation. Her boddice,

"WHY SHOULD THEY NOT COMBINE IN A GIVEN TIME?"—*See Page* 34.

moreover, was only imperfect in the shoulders, one being visibly larger than the other. She looked through the windows into the interior court, then into the garden, to make sure that she was alone with Balthazar, and then said to him in a soft voice, and with a look full of that submission which distinguishes Flemish woman—for love had long since driven from between them the pride of the Spanish grandee:

"Balthazar, you must be very busy! This is the thirty-third Sunday since you have been at either mass or vespers."

Claes made no reply; his wife bowed her head, clasped her hands and waited; she knew that this silence denoted neither contempt nor disdain, but a tyrannical preoccupation. Balthazar was one of those who retain for a long time their juvenile delicacy in the depths of their hearts; he would have deemed it criminal to express the least thought that could wound the feelings of a woman oppressed by the consciousness of her physical defects. He alone, perhaps, among men, knew that a word, a look, will blot out years of happiness, and are all the more cruel from their stronger contrast with an abiding gentleness; for our nature leads us to derive greater pain from a dissonance in felicity than we derive pleasure from a joy in misfortune. A few moments after, Balthazar seemed to awaken, looked anxiously around him, and said:—

"Vespers! ah! the children are at vespers."

He advanced a few steps to cast his eyes into the garden, where were numerous magnificent tulips; but he stopped all at once, as if he had run against a wall, and cried:

"Why should they not combine in a given time?"

"Is he going mad?" said the woman, with an expression of terror.

To give more interest to the scene to which this situation led, it is indispensable to cast a glance upon the anterior life of Balthazar Claes and the granddaughter of the Duke of Casa Real.

About the year 1783, M. Balthazar Claes-Molina de Nourho, then twenty-two years of age, might have passed for what in France is called a handsome man. He went to Paris to complete his education; he there found excellent manners in the society of Madame d'Egmont, the Count de Horn, Prince d'Aremberg, the Spanish Ambassador, Helvetius, Frenchmen originally from Belgium, or sojourners from that country, whose birth and fortune placed them among the nobles who at this period were leaders of fashion. Young Claes met several relations and friends, who launched him into high society, at the moment when this society was on the eve of its downfall; but, like most young people, he was more seduced at the outset by glory and science than by vanity. He therefore frequented the society of the savants, particularly that of Lavoisier, then attracting more public attention by the immense fortune of a farmer-general than by his discoveries

in chemistry, although, at a later period, the great chemist was destined to eclipse the insignificant farmer-general.

Balthazar was soon passionately devoted to the science professed by Lavoisier, and became his most ardent disciple; but he was young, handsome as Helvetius, and the women of Paris soon taught him to distil wit and love exclusively. Although he had embraced study with ardor, and Lavoisier had given him some encouragement, he abandoned his master to listen to the queens of taste from whom young men took their finishing lessons in the art of life, and fashioned themselves to the usages of that lofty society, which, in Europe, forms one single family. The intoxicating dream of success lasted but a short time; after having breathed the air of Paris, Balthazar left it, tired of a shallow life, one which accorded neither with his ardent mind nor his loving heart. Domestic life, so sweet, so calm, of which he was reminded by the very name of Flanders, appeared to him far more suited to his character and to the aspirations of his heart. No gilded Parisian salon had effaced the harmonies of the brown parlor and the little garden where his infancy had glided so happily away.

A man should have neither fireside nor country, to live in Paris. Paris is the city of the cosmopolite, or of men who have espoused the world and who are perpetually clasping it with the arm of science, art or power. The child of Flanders returned to

Douay, like La Fontaine's pigeon to its nest; he wept with joy at re-entering it on the day of the procession of Gayant. Gayant, that superstitious good fortune of the whole city, that triumph of Flemish recollections, had been introduced upon the occasion of the emigration of his family to Douay. The death of his father and that of his mother left the house of Claes a desert, and occupied him there some time. His first grief over, he felt the necessity of marrying, in order to complete the happy existence of which all the delights had again taken possession of his mind. He wished to follow the course of his family by going, like his ancestors, to seek a wife at Ghent, Bruges, or Antwerp; but none of the ladies he met with in those places suited him. He had, doubtless, peculiar ideas concerning marriage, for he was, from his youth, accused of not walking in the common way. One day, at the house of one of his relations at Ghent, he heard of a young lady who became the object of a warm discussion among the guests. Some maintained that the beauty of Mademoiselle de Temninck was destroyed by her imperfections; others considered her perfect in spite of her defects. The old cousin of Balthazar Claes told his guests, that handsome or not, she had a soul which would persuade him to marry her, if he were of a marrying age; and he related how she had just renounced her share of her father and mother's property, in order to secure for her young brother a marriage worthy of his name, thus preferring the

happiness of her brother to her own, and sacrificing her whole life to him. It was not to be supposed that Mademoiselle de Temninck would get married, now that she was growing old, and had no fortune, when she had not had a suitable offer while she was young and an heiress. A few days after, Balthazar Claes paid his court to Mademoiselle de Temninck, then twenty-five years of age, with whom he had fallen in love. Josephine de Temninck believed herself the object of a mere caprice, and refused to listen to him; but passion is so communicative, and, for a poor deformed and lame girl, a love with which she has inspired a young, well-made man, implies such great fascination on her part, that she consented to receive his addresses.

It would require a whole book adequately to describe the love of a young woman, who, while humbly submitting to the opinion which pronounces her ugly, feels within herself the irresistible charm which true sentiment produces. What terrible jealousies at the sight of happiness in others, what cruel longings for vengeance upon the rival who steals a glance, what emotions, what terrors, unknown to the majority of women, which would suffer by not being fully explained. Doubt, so dramatic in love, would be the key to this minute analysis, in which the hearts of many would discover the past, but not forgotten, poetry of their first tribulations; or those sublime delights in the depths of the soul which the countenance never betrays: that fear of not being

understood and the boundless joy of having been so; those hesitations of the heart now intent on self-examination, and those magnetic projections which give the eyes their infinite lights and shades; those plans of suicide suggested by a word and dispelled by an intonation of voice as comprehensive as the sentiment of which it reveals the existence, unknown till then; those trembling glances which disguise such terrible resolves; those sudden longings to speak and act that their own violence represses; that familiar eloquence which consists of unmeaning phrases, uttered in an agitated voice; the mysterious effects of that native purity of soul and that divine coyness which makes a woman generous though her generosity remain unknown, and gives an exquisite relish to an unsuspected love—in short, all the charms of love's young dream, and the very weaknesses of its power.

Mademoiselle Josephine de Temninck was a coquette from greatness of soul. The consciousness of her apparent imperfections made her as fastidious as the most beautiful person would have been. The fear of some day displeasing awakened her pride, destroyed her confidence, and gave her the courage to guard in the depths of her heart those early felicities which other women love to publish by their manners, and with which they proudly adorn themselves. The closer and more warmly did love impel her towards Balthazar, the more timid did she become in expressing her feelings to him. The ges-

ture, the look, the question and answer which in a beautiful woman are flattering to a man, were they not in her a humiliating speculation? A handsome woman may with impunity always be herself; the world always pardons her for a folly or a blunder; whilst a single look arrests the noblest sentiments on the lips of an ugly woman, abashes her eyes, augments the ill grace of her gestures, and embarrasses her behavior. Does she not know that to her alone it is forbidden to commit an error, that every one refuses her the chance of repairing it, and that, moreover, no one will afford her the opportunity? Must not the necessity of being at all times perfect annihilate her powers or fetter their exercise? Such a woman can only exist in an atmosphere of angelic indulgence. Where are the hearts from which indulgence flows unstained with a mortifying pity?

These thoughts, to which the horrible politeness of the world had accustomed her, and those regards which, more cruel than insults, aggravate misfortunes by verifying them, oppressed Mademoiselle de Temninck, causing a constant restraint which drove the most delicious impressions back to her secret soul, and stamped her attitude, her speech, and her look with coldness. She was in love by stealth; she did not dare to have either eloquence or beauty, except in solitude. Unhappy in open day, she would have been charming had she been allowed to live only by night. Often, in order to test Balthazar's love and at the risk of losing it, she neglected the

dress that might, in a degree, have concealed her defects. Her Spanish eyes flashed with delight when she perceived that Balthazar thought her handsome in undress. Nevertheless, distrust spoiled the few instants during which she ventured to give herself up to happiness. She soon asked herself if Claes did not seek to marry her that he might have a slave in his house, if he had not some secret defect which obliged him to content himself with a poor, misshapen girl.

These perpetual anxieties sometimes gave an incalculable price to the hours during which she believed in the duration and sincerity of a love which would avenge her on the world. She provoked delicate discussions by exaggerating her ugliness, in order to probe her lover's conscience, and drew from Balthazar truths by no means flattering to herself; but she was pleased with his embarrassment, when she had brought him to say that what was above everything to be loved in woman was a beautiful soul, and that devotion which renders the days of one's life so constantly happy; and that, after a few years of marriage, the most charming woman on earth becomes, to her husband, no better than the ugliest. After having raked together all that was true in the paradoxes which tend to diminish the value of beauty, Balthazar suddenly became aware of the awkwardness of the subject, and discovered all the goodness of his heart in the delicacy of the transitions by which he undertook to prove to

Mademoiseile de Temninck that she was beautiful to him. Self-sacrifice, which is, perhaps, in woman, the height of love, was not wanting in her, for she despaired of being always loved; but the prospect of a struggle, in which feeling was destined to prevail over beauty, tempted her; and then she thought there was something grand in giving herself up without believing in love; in short, she felt it would cost her too much to refuse happiness of however short duration it might be. These uncertainties and combats, communicating the charm and impulse of passion to this superior creature, inspired Balthazar Claes with an almost chivalric love.

The marriage took place at the commencement of the year 1795. The happy couple went back to Douay, to pass the early days of their union in the patriarchal residence of the Claeses, the treasures of which were increased by Mademoiselle de Temninck, who brought with her several fine pictures by Murillo and Velasquez, her mother's diamonds, and the magnificent presents sent her by her brother, who had become Duke of Casa Real. Few women were ever happier than Madame de Claes. Her happiness lasted fifteen years without the slightest cloud, and, like a brilliant light, it infused itself into the minutest details of her existence.

Most men have inequalities of character that produce continual discords; they thus deprive their homes of that harmony which is the beau ideal of domestic life; for most men are infected with little-

nesses, and littlenesses lead to bickerings. One will be honest and active, but hard and rough; another will be kind but obstinate; this one will love his wife, but be capricious; one that, preoccupied by ambition, will discharge his feelings as he would a debt; if he bestows the vanities of fortune, he carries away the joys of every-day life; in short, men of medium social character are essentially incomplete, without being notably open to reproach. Men of intellect are as variable as barometers, genius alone is essentially good. Pure happiness, therefore, is only to be met with at the two extremes of the moral scale. The good-natured fool, or the man of genius, are alone capable, the one from weakness, the other from power, of that equality of humor, of that constant mildness, in which the asperities of life melt gently away. With the one it is indifference and inertia; with the other it is indulgence and a continuity of the sublime thought of which he is the interpreter, and which must be the same in principle and practice. Both are equally simple and ingenuous; only with the first it is a void, whilst with the latter it is depth. Thus women of discernment are always disposed to take a fool as the best substitute for a great man.

Balthazar, then, carried his superiority into the smallest concerns of life, at first. It was his delight to consider conjugal love a magnificent work; and like men of lofty nature who can endure nothing imperfect, he wished to unfold all its beauties. His

wit constantly modified the calmness of happiness; his noble character stamped his attentions with the die of grace. Thus, although he partook of the philosophical principles of the eighteenth century, he installed in his house, up to 1801, in spite of the dangers with which the revolutionary law surrounded him, a Catholic priest, in order not to oppose the Spanish fanaticism which his wife had imbibed with her mother's milk from the Romish church; and when worship was re-established in France, he accompanied his wife to mass every Sunday. Never did his attachment abandon the appearance of passion. Never did he resort, in his family, to that protecting power which women love so much, because towards his wife it would have resembled pity. In short, by the most ingenious adulation, he treated her as his equal, and permitted some of those amiable mutinies to escape him which a man allows himself with a beautiful woman, as if to brave her superiority. His lips were always beaming with a smile of happiness, and his speech was always full of sweetness. He loved his Josephine for herself and for himself with that ardor which is a continual eulogy upon the qualities and the beauties of a woman. Fidelity, often the effect of a social principle, of a scruple, or of calculation with husbands, was in him involuntary, and not without the sweet flatteries of the spring-time of love. Duty was the only obligation of marriage unknown to these two equally loving beings; for

Balthazar Claes found in his Josephine a constant and complete realization of his hopes. In him, the heart was always satisfied without fatigue, and the man always happy.

Not only did her Spanish blood show itself in the grand-daughter of the Casa-Reals, by giving her, as an instinct, the art of varying pleasure to infinity, but she possessed also that boundless devotion which is the genius of her sex, as grace is all its beauty. Her love was a blind fanaticism, which, at a single nod of the head, would have borne her cheerfully on to death. Balthazar's delicacy had exalted in her the most generous feelings of the woman, and inspired her with an imperious need of giving more than she received. This mutual exchange, this alternate prodigality of happiness, plainly placed the principle of her life outside of herself, and diffused an increasing love through her words, her looks, and her actions. On both sides gratitude exalted and varied the life of the heart; just as the certainty of being everything for each other excluded the littlenesses of existence by making its least details important. Moreover, is not the deformed woman whom her husband thinks straight, the lame woman whom her husband would not have otherwise, or the old woman who to her husband appears young, are these not the happiest creatures of the feminine world? Human passion can go no further. Is it not the glory of a woman to make herself adored for what appears a defect? To forget that a lame

woman does not walk straight is the fascination of a moment; but to love her because she is lame is the deification of her deformity. We ought, perhaps, to engrave in the Gospel of women this sentence: *Blessed are the misshapen, to them belongs the kingdom of love!*

Certainly beauty must be a misfortune to a woman, for that fragile flower enters too much into the sentiment she inspires; do not men love a beautiful woman just as they marry a rich heiress? But the love created or felt by a woman disinherited of all the fragile charms after which the children of Adam run, is the true love, the truly mysterious passion, an ardent embrace of souls, a sentiment for which the day of disenchantment never comes. Such a woman has graces unknown to the world, from the control of which she withdraws herself; she is beautiful at the proper time, and reaps too much glory from making a husband forget her imperfections, not to succeed constantly in doing so. Thus, the most celebrated attachments in history were almost all inspired by women in whom the vulgar would have discovered blemishes. Cleopatra, Joan of Naples, Diane de Poictiers, Mademoiselle de la Valliere, Madame de Pompadour, in short, most of the women whom love has immortalized, were not without imperfections or infirmities, whilst the greater part of the women whose beauty is cited as perfect have ended their loves unhappily. This apparent contradiction must have a cause. Is it not, perhaps,

true, that man lives more by sentiment than by pleasure, and that the purely physical charm of a beautiful woman has limits, while the essentially moral charm of a moderately beautiful woman is infinite? Is not this the moral of the fable which forms the basis of "The Thousand and One Nights?" An ugly wife might have defied the axe of Henry VIII, and subdued the inconstancy of her master.

From a singularity easily explained in a girl of Spanish origin, Madame Claes was ignorant. She could read and write, but, up to the age of twenty, when her parents removed her from the convent, she had read none but ascetical works. On entering the world, she was, at first, naturally eager for its pleasures, and studied nothing but the futile science of dress; but she was so profoundly humiliated by her ignorance that she did not dare to join in any conversation; she was thus regarded as having little intelligence. The result of this mystic education, nevertheless, had been to leave her feelings in their full strength, and not to spoil her natural understanding. Stupid and plain as an heiress in the eyes of the world, she became intelligent and handsome to her husband. Balthazar had earnestly endeavored, during the early years of their union, to impart to his wife the knowledge she needed to be on a footing with the society in which they moved; but it was doubtless too late—she had no memory but that of the heart. Josephine forgot nothing that Claes said to her relating to themselves; she remembered

the least circumstances of their happy life, but she could not recollect in the morning the lesson of the night before. This ignorance would have led to discord between other married couples; but Madame Claes had such an ingenuous skill in her passion, she loved her husband so piously and sacredly, and the desire of preserving her happiness made her so acute, that she always managed to seem to understand him, and rarely allowed evidence of her ignorance to escape her. Besides, when two people love each other so that every day is to them like the first of their passion, there arise, in this prolific happiness, certain phenomena which change all the conditions of life. Maturity is then like infancy, careless of everything that is not laughter, joy, and pleasure. And then, when life is very active, when its sources are very ardent, a man allows the combustion to go on without either thinking of it, or examining it, without calculating the means or the end.

Never, moreover, did any daughter of Eve understand better than Madame Claes her duty as a wife. She had that Flemish submission which renders the domestic hearth so attractive, and to which her Spanish pride gave a higher savour. She was imposing, and knew how to command respect by a look which clearly exhibited an appreciation of her worth and her nobility: but before Claes she trembled, and, at length, she ended by placing him so high and so near to God, revealing to him every action of her life and every thought of her mind,

that her love was not without a tinge of respectful fear which sharpened it still more. She assumed with dignity all the habits of the Flemish housewife, and took pride in making domestic life sumptuously happy, in preserving all the details of her house in their classic cleanliness, in possessing nothing that was not absolutely good, in having the most delicate dishes on her table, and keeping everything around her in harmony with a life of the affections. They had two boys and two girls. The eldest, named Margaret, was born in 1796. The last child was a boy, three years old, named John Balthazar. The maternal feeling of Madame Claes was almost equal to her love for her husband. So there took place in her mind, particularly during the latter days of her life, a horrible combat between these two equally powerful feelings, one of which had, in some sort, become the enemy of the other. The tears and terror imprinted on her face at the moment when the recital of the domestic drama which was brewing in that peaceful dwelling begins, were caused by the fear of having sacrificed her children to her husband.

In 1805, the brother of Madame Claes died without children. The law of Spain does not allow the sister to succeed to the landed estate which form the apanage to the titles of a house; but the duke left her by will about sixty thousand ducats, which the heirs of the collateral branch did not dispute. Although the sentiment which united her to

Balthazar Claes was such that no consideration of moneyed interests ever tarnished it, Josephine experienced a sort of content in possessing a fortune equal to that of her husband, and was happy to offer him something in her turn after having so nobly received everything from him. Chance ordered it so, then, that this marriage, which calculators pronounced an act of folly, proved, in a pecuniary point of view, an excellent one. The employment of this money was a matter not easily determined upon.

The family mansion was so richly supplied with furniture, with pictures, with objects of art and value, that it seemed difficult to add anything worthy of what was already there. The taste of this family had tended towards the accumulation of vast treasures. One generation had devoted themselves to hunting for fine pictures; and the necessity of completing the collection had rendered the taste for paintings hereditary. The hundred pictures which ornamented the gallery by which the back quarter communicated with the reception-rooms in the first story of the front house, as well as about fifty others hung in the drawing-rooms, had required three centuries of patient search. These were celebrated works by Rubens, Ruysdael, Vandyck, Terburg, Gerard Dow, Teniers, Mieris, Paul Potter, Wouvermans, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Cranach, and Holbein. The Italian and French pictures were in a minority, but all were originals and of great price. Another generation had had a fancy for Japan and

Chinese porcelain. One Claes was passionately fond of furniture, another of silver plate; in short, every one of them had had his mania, his passion, one of the most striking features of the Flemish character. The father of Balthazar, the last member of the famous Dutch Association, had left one of the richest known collections of tulips. In addition to these hereditary riches, which represented an enormous capital, and magnificently furnished the old house—externally simple as a shell, but like a shell exhibiting, internally, mother-of-pearl and the richest colors—Balthazar Claes possessed a country-house in the plain of Orchies.

Far from basing his expenditure upon his income, like the French, he had followed the old Dutch custom of spending only a quarter of it, and twelve hundred ducats per annum placed his expenses on a level with those of the richest persons of the city. The publication of the Civil Code proved the wisdom of this. By ordering an equal division of his property, the article entitled "Successions" would have left all the children poor, and finally have dispersed the riches of the old Claes museum. Balthazar, with the consent of Madame Claes, placed out the fortune of his wife in such a manner as to assure each of their children a position similar to that of the father. The house of Claes then went on in its old modest way; the family purchased some woods a little damaged by the wars that had taken place, but which, if well preserved, were destined within ten years, to

increase enormously in value. The good society of Douay, which Claes frequented, had so appreciated the fine character and qualities of his wife, that, by a sort of tacit agreement, she was exempted from the duties to which provincials attach so much importance. During the winter season she seldom went into company; company came to her. She received every Wednesday, and gave three grand dinners a month. Every one felt that she was more at her ease in her own house, where, indeed, her love for her husband and the cares of the education of her children confined her.

Such was, up to 1809, the management of this household, which offered little or nothing in conformity with received ideas. The life of these two beings, full of love and joy, was outwardly like any other. The passion of Balthazar Claes for his wife, which his wife had the skill to perpetuate, appeared, as he himself observed, to employ its innate constancy in the culture of happiness, which was a good deal better than the culture of tulips, towards which he had been inclined from his childhood, and which prevented his having his mania, as each of his ancestors had had.

At the end of this year the mind and manners of Balthazar underwent a sad alteration, which began so naturally that at first Madame Claes did not think it necessary to ask him the cause. One night her husband went to bed in a state of preoccupation which she felt it a duty to respect. Her womanly

delicacy and her habits of submission had always led her to wait for Balthazar's communications, her trust in him being guaranteed by an affection so true that it gave jealousy no foothold. Although certain of obtaining a reply whenever she should permit herself to ask an inquisitive question, she had always retained, from her first impressions in life, the fear of a refusal. Besides, the moral malady of her husband had phases, and only reached by gradually increasing shades that intolerable violence which destroyed the happiness of his household. However occupied, Balthazar remained, nevertheless, for several months, chatty and affectionate, and the change in his character then manifested itself only by frequent fits of absent-mindedness. Madame Claes hoped for a long time to learn from her husband himself the secret of his labors; perhaps, she thought, he was not willing to confess it till the moment when they should appear in the shape of useful results, for many men have a pride which leads them to conceal their trials and only exhibit themselves victorious. At the hour of triumph, Balthazar's domestic happiness would be more intense from his perceiving the gap in his life of love — a gap which his heart would, without doubt, disavow. Josephine knew her husband well enough to be sure that he would not forgive himself for having made his Pepita less happy for several long months. She remained silent therefore, experiencing a kind of joy in suffering by him, for him; for her passion

had in it a tinge of that Spanish piety which never separates faith from love, and does not comprehend sentiment without suffering. She waited, therefore, for a return of affection, saying to herself every evening—"It will be to-morrow!" and treating her happiness like an absent person.

It was in the midst of these secret troubles that she conceived her last child. Horrible revelation of a future of sorrow! On this occasion, love, among her husband's distractions, was merely a distraction stronger than the rest. Her woman's pride, wounded for the first time, led her to sound the depth of the unknown abyss which separated her forever from the Claes of early days. From this moment Balthazar grew worse. The man who had formerly been incessantly steeped in domestic enjoyments, who would play for whole hours with his children, rolling with them on the parlor carpet or upon the turf in the garden, who seemed unable to live except under the black eyes of his Pepita, did not even perceive the condition of his wife, forgot to live with her and his children, and forgot himself.

The longer Madame Claes delayed asking him the object of his occupations, the less she dared. At the bare idea her blood boiled and her voice failed her. She at length believed she no longer pleased her husband, and was seriously alarmed. This fear occupied her mind, alternately depressing and exciting her, and became food for melancholy hours and bitter reveries. She justified Balthazar at her own

expense, fancying herself grown ugly and old; then she caught a glimpse of a thought, generous in itself but humiliating for her, in the labors by which he preserved a negative fidelity. She was then anxious to restore him his independence by allowing the establishment of one of those secret divorces which seem to constitute the happiness of certain families. Before, however, bidding adieu to conjugal life, she made one endeavor to read the depths of his heart, but found it closed. She saw Balthazar becoming gradually indifferent to everything he had loved, neglecting his tulips in blossom, and thinking no longer of his children. No doubt he had given himself up to some passion with which the affections of the heart had nothing to do, but which, according to woman's creed, none the less dries up the heart. Love was sleeping, but had not fled. Although this was a consolation, the unhappiness remained all the same. The continuance of this crisis is explained by a single word, hope, the secret of all such conjugal anxieties.

At the moment when the poor woman was driven to a degree of despair that gave her courage to question her husband, at that precise instant she would be blessed by an interval of happiness, during which Balthazar proved that if he was possessed by some diabolical thoughts, they permitted him at times to become himself again. During these moments in which her sky cleared up, she was too eager to enjoy her happiness to disturb it by impor-

tunity ; and then, when she had mustered up all her courage to interrogate Balthazar, at the very moment she was about to open her lips, he would escape her by leaving her suddenly, or would sink into the gulf of his meditations from which nothing could draw him.

The reaction of the moral upon the physical very soon commenced its ravages ; imperceptibly at first, but nevertheless, not likely to escape the eye of a loving woman who watched the secret pondering of her husband in its least manifestations. It was often difficult for her to restrain her tears, upon seeing him, after dinner, sink back into an arm-chair by the fire-side, gloomy and thoughtful, with his eyes fixed upon one of the black panels, unconscious of the silence that reigned around him. She observed, with terror, the gradual changes which lay waste the face love had made sublime for her. Every day the life of the soul departed from it more and more ; the physical framework remained without expression. At times his eyes assumed a glassy color ; it seemed as if the sight was reversed and exercised itself within. When the children were in bed, after hours of silence and solitude spent in frightful thoughts, if poor Pepita ventured to ask : " My dear, are you suffering ?" sometimes Balthazar would not reply at all ; or, if he did, he appeared to come to himself with a start, like a man suddenly roused from sleep, and pronounced a dry, cavernous *no*, which fell heavily upon the palpitating heart of his wife. How-

ever anxious to conceal from her friends the extraordinary position in which she was placed, she was forced to speak of it. According to the custom of small cities, Balthazar's singular conduct had been the subject of conversation with a majority of the people, and certain circles were already acquainted with many details of which Madame Claes was ignorant. Thus, in spite of the silence commanded by courtesy, some of his friends evinced such lively anxiety on his account, that she was obliged to justify the singularities of her husband.

"Balthazar had," she said, "undertaken a great work, which certainly absorbed him, but his success would prove a source of glory for his family and his country."

This mysterious explanation was too flattering to the ambition of a city, in which, more than in any other, the love of country and the desire for its distinction prevailed, not to produce a reaction in the public mind favorable to M. Claes. The suppositions of his wife were, up to a certain point, well founded. Several workmen of various professions had for a long time been employed in the garret of the front house, to which Balthazar repaired as soon as he was up in the morning. After having prolonged his daily sojourn in this retreat more and more, so that his wife and children became accustomed to it, Balthazar, at length, remained there whole days together. But, grief most appalling! Madame Claes at length learned from the humiliat-

ing confidences of her kind friends, who were astonished at her ignorance, that her husband was constantly procuring from Paris instruments used in physics, valuable materials, books and machines, and was, as they said, ruining himself seeking the philosopher's stone. She ought to think of her children, they added, of her own future life, and it would be criminal on her part not to exert all her influence over her husband to divert him from such fatal pursuits.

Although Madame Claes had recourse to her dignity as a great lady to silence these absurd assertions, she was seized with terror, in spite of her apparent assurance, and resolved to abandon her course of abnegation. She brought about one of those situations in which a wife is on an equal footing with her husband; and thus she ventured with less fear to ask Balthazar the reason of the great change in him, and the motive for his constant retirement. The Fleming knitted his brows, and replied :—

"My dear, you wouldn't understand anything about it."

One day, Josephine insisted upon being made acquainted with his secret, complaining mildly of not being allowed to share the thoughts of him with whom she shared her life.

"If it interests you so much," replied Balthazar, detaining his wife upon his knee, and stroking her black hair, "I will tell you that I have resumed my

old study of chemistry, and that I am the happiest man alive."

Two years after the winter in which M. Claes had become a chemist again, the aspect of the house was quite changed. Whether society was disgusted with the perpetual distraction of the savant, and feared to trouble him, or whether her secret anxieties made Madame Claes less amiable, she no longer received any but her most intimate friends. Balthazar went nowhere; he shut himself up in his laboratory during the day, remained there sometimes all night, joining his family only at dinner-time. He had ceased to spend the summer in the country, and his wife could not think of residing there alone. Sometimes Balthazar would leave his house, walk out of the city and not return till the next day, leaving Madame Claes in a state of mortal anxiety during the night; after having fruitlessly sought for him in the city, the gates of which were closed at evening as in all fortified places, she was unable to send any one in pursuit of him into the country. The unhappy wife did not then have even that hope mingled with anguish which expectation affords, and she suffered on till the morrow. Balthazar, who had forgotten the hour for closing the gates, would arrive the next day very quietly, without appearing to suspect the tortures his absence had inflicted upon his family; and then the happiness of seeing him again was, for his wife, as dangerous a crisis as her apprehensions could have been; she was silent,

durst not question him, for to her first inquiry, he would reply with an air of surprise: "What! Can't I take a walk?"

The passions never deceive. The uneasiness of Madame Claes now justified the reports it had pleased her to contradict. Her youth had made her well acquainted with the polite pity of the world; to avoid undergoing it a second time, she confined herself more closely than ever within the walls of her house, which all the world, even her most intimate friends, now deserted. The disorder of his dress, always so degrading in a man of the upper class, became so great with Balthazar, that, among her numerous causes of grief, this was not the least, to a woman accustomed to the exquisite cleanliness and neatness of the Flemings. In concert with Lemulquinier, her husband's valet, Josephine for a time remedied the daily devastation of his garments, but was soon obliged to desist. The very day when, unknown to Balthazar, new clothes had been substituted for those which were stained, torn or in holes, he made rags of them.

This woman, who had been so happy during fifteen years, and whose jealousy had never been awakened, suddenly found herself no longer anything apparently in the heart where she had formerly reigned. Spanish by birth, the spirit of the Spanish woman revolted within her when she discovered a rival in the Science that deprived her of her husband; the torments of jealousy devoured her heart, and revived

her love. But what could she do against Science? How was she to combat its incessant, tyrannical and increasing power? How could she destroy an invisible rival? How could a woman, whose power is limited by nature, contend with an idea the enjoyments of which are infinite and the attractions ever new? What had she to oppose to the coquetry of ideas that never lost their freshness, that sprang up again more beautiful in the midst of difficulties, that lured a man so far from the world as to make him forget even his most cherished affections?

At length, one day, in spite of the severe orders Balthazar had given, his wife was determined at least not to leave him, to shut herself up with him in the garret to which he retired, to fight, hand to hand, with her rival, and to assist her husband during the long hours he lavished upon this terrible mistress. She sought to glide secretly into his mysterious workshop of seduction, and acquire the right to remain there. She endeavored therefore to share with Lemulquinier the privilege of entering the laboratory; but to prevent his being a witness of the quarrel which she dreaded, she waited for a day when her husband would not need his valet. For some time she had watched the comings and goings of this domestic with a kind of malignant impatience; "was he not acquainted with all she wished to learn, with what her husband concealed from her, and what she did not dare ask him about!" She fancied Lemulquinier more favored than she was

she, the wife! She went, therefore, trembling and almost happy; but for the first time in her life, she incurred the anger of Balthazar. Scarcely had she opened the door, when he sprang towards her, seized hold of her, and threw her roughly back towards the stairs, down which she came near rolling from top to bottom.

"God be praised, you are alive!" cried Balthazar, lifting her up.

A glass mask was broken into fragments over Madame Claes, who beheld her husband pale, haggard, and terrified.

"My dear, I had forbidden you to come here," said he, seating himself on one of the stairs like a man overcome. "The saints have preserved you from death. By what happy chance was it my eyes happened to be directed towards the door? We might both have perished!"

"I should have been happy, then!" she said.

"My experiment has failed," resumed Balthazar. "I could forgive no one but you the grief your cruel interruption causes me. I was perhaps upon the very point of decomposing azote. Come, go back to your affairs." Balthazar re-entered his laboratory.

"*I was perhaps upon the point of decomposing azote!*" said the poor woman to herself as she regained her chamber, where she burst into tears.

This sentence was unintelligible to her. Men, accustomed by their education to conceive every

thing, do not know how horrible it is for a woman not to be able to understand the thoughts of him she loves. More indulgent than we are, the divine creatures do not tell us when the language of their souls is misapprehended; they fear to make us feel the superiority of their sentiments, and conceal their griefs with as much joy as they do their unappreciated pleasures: but more ambitious in love than we are, they would espouse more than the heart of man, they would also have all his thought. Madame Claes' ignorance of the Science that occupied her husband engendered in her heart a greater vexation than that caused by the beauty of a rival. A contest of woman with woman leaves to her who loves best the advantage of loving better; but in this case, her vexation showed her powerlessness, and humbled all the feelings that help us to live. Josephine did not know! She found herself in a situation in which her ignorance separated her from her husband. And, to crown all—the last torture and the most keen—he was often between life and death, he incurred dangers far from her though close to her, without her sharing them, without her knowing them. This was, like eternal punishment, a moral prison without issue, without hope. Madame Claes was determined at least to be acquainted with the attractions of this science, and set secretly about studying chemistry in books. The family was now, as it were, shut up in a cloister.

Such were the successive transitions through

which misfortune goaded the house of Claes, before bringing it to that species of moral death with which it was stricken at the moment this history begins.

This extraordinary situation became more complicated. Like all passionate women, Madame Claes was exceedingly disinterested. They who truly love know of how little value money is in comparison with the sentiments, and with what difficulty it becomes associated with them. Nevertheless, it was not without cruel emotion that Josephine learned that her husband owed a mortgage of three hundred thousand francs upon his property. The authenticity of the contracts justified the uneasiness, the reports, and conjectures of the city. Madame Claes, justly alarmed, was forced, she who was so proud, to question her husband's notary, to acquaint him with the secret of her griefs, or to leave him to infer them, and to hear at last this humiliating inquiry:— "What! has M. Claes told you nothing about it?"

Fortunately, Balthazar's notary was almost a relation, and in this way: the grandfather of M. Claes had married a Pierquin, of Antwerp, who belonged to the same family as the Pierquins of Douay. After this marriage, the latter, though strangers to the Claeses, treated them as cousins. M. Pierquin, a young man of twenty-six, who had just succeeded to the notaryship of his father, was the only person who had access to the house. Madame Balthazar had, for several months, lived in such complete solitude, that the notary was obliged to assure her that the

news of the disaster, already known to the whole city, was true. He told her that her husband probably owed considerable sums to the house which furnished him with chemical materials. This house, after having made inquiries as to the property and standing of M. Claes, honored all his orders, and sent the supplies without hesitation, notwithstanding the heavy credit thus given. Madame Claes charged Pierquin to demand an account of all that had been furnished her husband. Two months after, MM. Protez et Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemical instruments and materials, sent in a bill which amounted to a hundred thousand francs.

Madame Claes and Pierquin examined this bill with increasing astonishment. Although many articles, entered under their commercial or scientific names, were unintelligible to them, they were terrified at items of portions of metals and diamonds of all sorts, but in small quantities. The total of the debt was easily explained by the multiplicity of the articles, by the precaution necessary for the transportation of certain substances, or the carriage of valuable machines, by the exorbitant price of several materials which were either obtained with difficulty or were made dear by their scarcity, and, lastly, by the value of the physical and chemical instruments manufactured according to the instructions of M. Claes.

The notary, in the interest of his cousin, had made inquiries respecting Protez and Chiffreville, and

SCARCELY HAD SHE OPENED THE DOOR WHEN HE SPRANG TOWARD HER.—*See Page* 61.

their acknowledged probity guaranteed the honesty of their transactions with M. Claes, to whom, indeed, they had often imparted results obtained by chemists at Paris, in order to save him expense. Madame Claes implored the notary to conceal the nature of these purchases from the Douaysians—purchases which would have been taxed as follies; but Pierquin replied that, not to weaken the consideration Claes enjoyed, he had already delayed till the last moment the notarial bonds which the extent of the sums lent in confidence by his clients had at last necessitated. He laid the extent of the danger open, by telling Madame Claes, as his cousin, that if she did not find a way to prevent her husband from spending his fortune so madly, in six months the patrimonial property would be encumbered with mortgages exceeding its value. As for himself, he added, the observations he had made to his cousin, with a consideration due to a man so justly respected, had not produced the least effect. Balthazar had replied, once for all, that he was working for the glory and fortune of his family.

Thus, to all the tortures of the heart that Madame Claes had endured for two years, every one of which was added to the others, and increased the anxiety of the moment by all her past distress, was now joined a frightful incessant dread, which made the future terrible. Women have presentiments so true that they border on the marvellous. Why, as a general thing, do they tremble more than they hope,

when the interests of life are concerned? Why have they no faith but in the grand ideas of a religious future? Why do they divine so skilfully the catastrophes of fortune or the crises of our destinies? Perhaps the feeling that unites them to the man they love, makes them accurately weigh his strength, estimate his faculties, know his tastes, passions, vices, and virtues; the perpetual study of these causes, in presence of which they incessantly find themselves, gives them, without doubt, the fatal power of foreseeing their effects in all possible situations. What they see of the present enables them to judge of the future, with a skill naturally explained by the perfection of their nervous system—one which permits them to seize the slightest diagnostics of thought or feeling. Everything in them vibrates in unison with great moral commotions. They either feel or they see.

Now, although separated from her husband for two years, Madame Claes had had a presentiment of the loss of her fortune. She had properly estimated the deliberate passion, the unalterable firmness of Balthazar; if it was true that he was trying to make gold, he would cast, with perfect recklessness, his last morsel of bread into the crucible. But what was he seeking? Hitherto, maternal love and conjugal affection had been so completely confounded in the heart of this woman, that her children, equally beloved by herself and her husband, had never intervened between them. But now, suddenly,

she became rather a mother than a wife, although she was more frequently a wife than a mother. And yet, however disposed she might be to sacrifice her fortune, and even her children to the happiness of him who had chosen her, loved her, and adored her, and with whom she was still the only woman in the world, the remorse caused by her maternal love reduced her to terrible dilemmas.

Thus, as a wife, she suffered in her heart; as a mother, she suffered in her children; and as a Christian, she suffered for all. She was silent, and confined these devastating storms within her own soul. Her husband, the only arbiter of the fate of his family, was the master, and had the right to regulate its destiny at his will; he owed an account to none but God. Besides, could she reproach him with the employment of his fortune after the disinterestedness he had displayed during ten years of his married life? Was she a competent judge of his designs? But her conscience, in accordance with feeling and the laws, told her that parents were the depositaries of the family fortune, and had no right to alienate the material happiness of their children. In order to escape solving these momentous questions, she preferred shutting her eyes, after the manner of people who refuse to look at the abyss to the bottom of which they know they must fall.

For six months her husband had given her no money for household expenses. She secretly sent the rich diamond ornaments which her brother had

given her on the day of her marriage, to Paris, to be sold; and introduced the most rigid economy into her family expenditure. She dismissed her children's governess, and even little Jean's nurse. The luxury of carriages had been, until lately, unknown to the bourgeoisie, at once so humble in their manners and so proud in their feelings; nothing therefore, had been provided in the Claes mansion for this modern invention. Balthazar had been compelled to have his stables and coach-house in a building opposite his own. His occupations not permitting him to superintend this part of the establishment, which belongs exclusively to the men, Madame Claes at once got rid of the onerous expense of equipages and servants, which her isolation rendered useless. Notwithstanding the validity of these reasons, she did not attempt to color her reforms by pretexts. Up to the present time, facts had falsified her assertions, and silence was thenceforward most suitable. This change in the Claeses' mode of living was not justifiable in a country where, as in Holland, he who spends all his income passes for a madman. Only, as her eldest daughter Margaret was nearly sixteen, Josephine appeared desirous of procuring her a suitable alliance, and establishing her in the world as a girl allied to the Molinas, the Van-Ostrom Temnincks and the Casa-Reals, ought to be established. Some days before that on which this history begins, the money realized from the diamonds was exhausted. This

same day, at three o'clock, whilst taking her children to vespers, Madame Claes had met Pierquin, on his way to see her; he accompanied her to St. Peter's, conversing with her, in a low voice, upon her situation.

"My dear cousin," said he, "I cannot, without being wanting in the friendship which attaches me to your family, conceal from you the peril in which you stand; I implore you to confer with your husband upon it. Who but you can stop him on the brink of the abyss at which you have arrived? The revenues from the property mortgaged are not sufficient to pay the interest on the sums borrowed; so you are at this moment without income. If you cut the woods you possess, it would be depriving yourself of the only chance of safety left for the future. My cousin Balthazar is at this moment indebted to the house of Protez and Chiffreville to the amount of thirty thousand francs. With what will you pay this sum? What will you live on? And what will become of you if Claes continues to send for chemicals, retorts, voltaic batteries, and other trumpery? The whole of your fortune, except the house and furniture, has been dissipated into gas and carbon. When it was proposed to him to mortgage his house day before yesterday, what do you think was Claes' reply? 'The devil!' And that is the only symptom of reason he has shown for three years!"

Madame Claes pressed the arm of Pierquin sorrow-

fully, raised her eyes towards heaven, and said:—"Pray keep this a secret."

In spite of her piety, the poor woman, crushed by these words that fell upon her like a thunderbolt, could not pray; she sat upon her chair among her children, opened her missal without turning a leaf; she had sunk into a contemplation as absorbing as were the meditations of her husband. Spanish honor, Flemish honesty, resounded in her soul with a voice as powerful as that of the organ. The ruin of her children was consummated! Between them and the honor of their father she could no longer hesitate. The necessity of a speedy contest between her and her husband terrified her; he was, in her eyes, so great, so imposing, that the mere prospect of his anger agitated her as much as the idea of the Divine majesty. She was about, then, to depart from that constant submission in which she had so sacredly abided as a wife. The interests of her children would oblige her to thwart a man she idolized in his tastes. Would it not be often necessary to bring him rudely back to positive questions when he was hovering about in the lofty regions of Science, to drag him violently from a smiling future to plunge him into the most hideous state that material life can present to artists and great men? For her, Balthazar Claes was a giant of science, a man big with glory; he could not have forgotten her but for the most seductive hopes. And then he was so sensible; she had heard him speak with so much ability upon

questions of all sorts, that he must be sincere when he said he was laboring for the glory and fortune of his family. The love of this man for his wife and children was not only immense, it was infinite. These feelings could not be dead, they were no doubt ennobled while reproducing themselves in another form. She, so noble so generous, and so timid, was about to ring constantly in the ears of this great man the word money and the sound of money, to lay bare before him the necessities of want, to ask him to listen to cries of distress, while he might be listening to the melodious tongue of Fame. Might she not thus diminish Balthazar's affection for her? If she had had no children, she would have embraced courageously and with pleasure the new destiny her husband was laying out for her. Women brought up in opulence are prompt to recognize the emptiness of material enjoyments; and when their hearts, more fatigued than withered, have shown them the happiness that springs from a constant exchange of true feelings, they do not shrink from an humble existence, if it suit the being by whom they feel themselves beloved. Their ideas, their pleasures, are dependent upon the caprices of a life altogether outside of their own; for them the only future to be dreaded is the loss of it.

At this moment, then, her children separated Pepita from her true life, as much as Balthazar Claes had been separated from her by Science; so, when she

returned from vespers, and had thrown herself into her easy-chair, she sent her children away, commanding them to preserve the most profound silence, and then sent word to her husband that she wished to see him; but, although Lemulquinier, his old valet, had endeavored to drag him from his laboratory, he persisted in remaining there. Madame Claes had, therefore, time to reflect; and she remained thoughtful, heedless of the hour, the time, or the day. The thought of owing thirty thousand francs, and being unable to pay them, revived her past sorrows, and mingled them with those of the present and the future. She was too weak to bear this weight of interests, ideas, and sensations, and she wept. When she saw Balthazar enter, with a countenance apparently more terrible, more absorbed, more wandering than it had ever been; and when he did not answer her, she felt at first fascinated by the immobility of that blank, vague look, by all the devouring ideas distilled from that bald brow. She desired to die under the stroke of this first impression. When she heard that careless voice uttering a scientific aspiration at the moment when her heart was breaking, her courage returned; she resolved to enter the lists against the terrible power which had ravished a lover from her, a father from her children, a fortune from her house, and happiness from them all. Nevertheless, she could not repress the trepidation by which she was agitated, for, during her whole life, she had not passed through a scene so solemn. Was

not this terrible moment big with fate, and was not her whole past summed up in it?

Now, weak people, timid persons, or those to whom the vivacity of their sensations magnifies even the least difficulties of life, men who are seized with an involuntary trembling when confronted with the arbiters of their destiny, can all conceive the thousand thoughts that were whirling in the brain of this woman, and the feelings under the weight of which her heart sank within her, when her husband slowly directed his steps towards the garden door. Most women understand the anguish of the secret deliberation with which Madame Claes contended. Even those whose hearts have not been more violently moved than by the revelation of some excess in their expenditure, or of debts incurred at the dressmaker's, will easily comprehend how much the throbbings of the heart must augment when life itself is involved. A beautiful woman is still more beautiful when throwing herself at the feet of her husband, and finds resources in the very attitudes of her grief; whereas the consciousness of her physical defects still further increased the fears of Madame Claes. So, when she saw Balthazar about to leave the room, her first impulse was to spring towards him; but a bitter thought restrained her,—she was about to stand up before him! Would she not appear ridiculous to a man who, being no longer under the fascinations of love, might see correctly? Josephine would willingly have lost all, fortune and

children, rather than diminish her woman's power. She wished to avoid every ill chance in an hour so solemn, and called loudly:—"Balthazar!" He turned round mechanically and coughed; but, without paying attention to his wife, he went and spit into one of those little square boxes placed at intervals along the wainscot, as in all the apartments of Holland and Belgium. This man, who thought of nobody, never forgot the spittoons, so inveterate was the habit. As to poor Josephine, incapable of accounting for this peculiarity, her husband's constant solicitude for the furniture always gave her great pain; but, on this occasion, it was so violent as to carry her beyond all bounds, and made her exclaim in a tone of impatience, expressive of her wounded sensibilities:

"Sir, I am speaking to you!"

"What does that mean?" said Balthazar, turning sharply round, and darting at his wife a look instinct, now, with life, and which was a thunder-clap to her.

"Pardon me, my dear," she said, turning pale. She endeavored to rise, and hold out her hand towards him, but she sank back helpless. "I am dying!" she said, in a voice broken by sobs.

At this sight, Balthazar underwent, like all absent-minded men, a lively reaction, and divined, thus to speak, the secret of this crisis. He immediately took Madame Claes in his arms, opened the door of the little ante-chamber, and passed so rapidly up the old wooden stairs, that his wife's dress having caught in

the open maw of one of the fabulous animals which formed the balustrade, he left behind a whole breadth, torn out with a loud noise. He burst open the door of the common vestibule of their apartments; but he found his wife's chamber closed.

He placed his wife gently in an arm-chair, saying:—"Good heavens, where is the key?"

"Thank you, my dear," responded Madame Claes, opening her eyes; "this is the first time, for many a day, that I have felt myself so near your heart."

"Good gracious," repeated Claes, "the key; here are the servants."

Josephine motioned to him to take the key, which was fastened to a string hanging down by her pocket. After having opened the door, Balthazar laid his wife upon a couch, went out to prevent the terrified servants from coming up, by ordering them to serve the dinner immediately, and then returned eagerly to his wife.

"What is the matter, my darling?" said he, sitting down by her, and taking her hand, which he kissed.

"Nothing now," she replied; "I no longer suffer. I only wish I had the power of God to lay all the gold in the world at your feet."

"Why gold?" he asked, drawing her closer to him, and kissing her brow again. "Do you not give me greater riches in loving me as you do, dear and precious creature?" he continued.

"Oh, Balthazar! why will you not dispel the anguish of all our lives, as with your voice you ban-

ish grief from my heart. I see you are still the same."

"Of what anguish are you speaking, my love?"

"Why, we are ruined, my dear!"

"Ruined!" he repeated. He began to smile, caressed his wife's hand, which he held in his own, and said, in that soft voice so long silent:—"Why to-morrow, my angel, our fortune will, perhaps, be boundless. Yesterday, while searching for secrets much more important, I think I found the means of crystallizing carbon, the basis of diamonds. Oh! my dear wife, in a few days you will forgive me all my distractions. It appears I am absent-minded sometimes. Was I not very abrupt with you just now? Be indulgent with a man who has never ceased to think of you, whose labors are all full of you, of us."

"Enough! enough!" she said; "we will talk this all over my dear, this evening. I have suffered from too much trouble, now I suffer from too much pleasure."

She had not expected to see that face again animated by a sentiment as tender as of yore, to hear that voice still as sweet as it had ever been, to recover what she imagined she had forever lost.

"This evening," he replied, "we will talk the matter over. If I am absorbed in revery, remind me of this promise. I mean to give up my calculations and my labors to-night, and plunge deep into the joys and pleasures of the fireside and the hearth; for

I am actually in need of them. Pepita, I thirst for them!"

"You'll tell me what you are searching for, won't you, Balthazar?"

"Why, my poor child, you would not understand it."

"You think so! For four months, love, I have been studying chemistry, so as to be able to talk with you about it. I have read Fourcroy, Lavoisier, Chaptal, Nollet, Rouelle, Berthollet, Gay-Lussac, Spalanzani, Leuwenhoek, Galvani, Volta, in short, all sorts of books relative to the science you worship. Oh, you can tell me your secrets."

"You are an angel," cried Balthazar, falling at the knees of his wife, and shedding tears of tenderness that almost made her tremble, "we shall understand each other in everything."

"Ah!" said she, "I would throw myself into the fire from hell that rages in your furnaces, to hear those words from your mouth, and to see you as I see you now." Hearing her daughter's step in the ante-chamber, she sprang forward to meet her. "What do you wish, Margaret?" she said to her eldest daughter.

"My dear mother, Monsieur Pierquin has just come. If he stays to dinner, I shall need a clean cloth, and you forgot to give me one this morning."

Madame Claes drew a bunch of keys from her pocket and gave them to her daughter, pointing out to her the mahogany chests which stood against the

walls; "choose from among the damask sets on the right."

"As my dear Balthazar returns to me to-day, give him wholly back to me," she said, returning and putting on a charming expression of playfulness. "Go to your own room, my dear, and do me the favor to dress yourself. Pierquin dines with us. Take off these ragged clothes. Just look at these stains. I suppose it's muriatic or sulphuric acid that has edged all these holes with yellow. Come, make yourself young again. I will send Mulquinier to you, when I have changed my gown."

Balthazar tried to go into his room through the door communicating with it, but he had forgotten that it was locked on his side. He went out by the ante-chamber.

"Margaret, put the cloth upon a chair, and come and dress me, I don't want Martha," said Madame Claes to her daughter.

Balthazar, on passing out, had seized Margaret, pulled her playfully towards him, and said, "Good morning, my child! How pretty you look to-day with your muslin gown and your pink sash." Then he kissed her on the forehead, and pressed her hand.

"Mamma, papa has just kissed me," cried Margaret, on entering her mother's room, "he seems quite gay and happy."

"My child, your father is a very great man, he has been toiling for three years for the glory and

wealth of his family, and he thinks he has attained the object of his investigations. To-day is to be a season of joy for us."

"My dear mother," replied Margaret, "the servants were so sorry to see him chagrined, that we shall not be the only ones to rejoice. Oh, put on another sash, this one is so much faded."

"Very well, but let us be quick, for I want to speak with Pierquin. Where is he?"

"He's playing with Jean in the parlor."

"Where are Gabriel and Felicie?"

"I hear them in the garden."

"Well, go down quick and take care that they do not pick any tulips! Your father has not seen them yet this year, and he might be glad to look at them to-day, on rising from table. Tell Mulquinier to take your father whatever he needs for his toilet."

When Margaret had gone, Madame Claes cast a glance at her children through the chamber windows which looked upon the garden, and saw them busy gazing at one of those insects with shining, green, gold-spotted wings, called Devil's-darning-needles.

"Be good children, my darlings," she said, raising the sash and leaving it up to air the room. Then she knocked gently at the door leading to her husband's apartment to make sure that he had not fallen into another fit of abstraction. He opened the door, and she, delighted to find him dressing, said

joyously: "You will not leave me long with Pierquin, will you? Please join me soon."

She ran down stairs so nimbly, that no stranger, on hearing her, would have pronounced her step that of a lame person.

"As master was carrying you just now, madame," said the valet whom she met on the stairs, "he tore your dress; that's no matter, it's only a bit of silk, but he broke the jaw of this figure, and I don't know any one that can mend it. So the staircase is dishonored! It was a very fine flight."

"Nonsense, my poor Mulquinier, don't have it mended, there's no harm done."

"What can have happened," said Lemulquinier to himself, "to prevent there being any harm? Can master have discovered the Absolute?"

"Good day to you, Monsieur Pierquin," said Madame Claes, opening the parlor door.

The notary hastened to offer his arm to his cousin, but she never took that of any one but her husband. She thanked Pierquin by a smile, and said: "Have you come for the thirty thousand francs?"

"Yes, madame. On returning home I found a notice from the firm of Protez and Chiffreville, that they have drawn six bills of exchange on Monsieur Claes for five thousand francs each."

"Very well. Do not speak of it to Balthazar to-day," she replied. "Dine with us. If he happens to ask you what brought you here, invent some plausible excuse. Give me the notice, I will speak

to him myself about it. Everything is going on well," she added, observing the notary's astonishment. "My husband will probably repay the amounts borrowed in a few months' time."

While listening to this whispered sentence, the notary looked at Margaret coming in from the garden, followed by Gabriel and Felicie, and said, "I have never seen Mademoiselle Claes looking so pretty as she does at this moment."

Madame Claes, who had seated herself in her armchair, and had taken little Jean in her lap, raised her head and looked with an air affectedly indifferent at her daughter and the notary.

Pierquin was of medium height, neither fat nor thin; his face was, in an ordinary way, handsome enough, and expressed a sadness rather peevish than melancholy, a tendency to revery rather undecided than pensive. He passed for a misanthrope, but he was too selfish and too great an eater for his divorce from the world to be real. His gaze, which was habitually bent on vacancy, his indifferent attitude, his affected silence, appeared to denote depth, whilst in reality they covered the emptiness and nullity of a notary exclusively occupied with worldly interests, and who still found himself young enough to be envious. An alliance with the house of Claes would have been with him the cause of the most boundless devotion, if he had not had an underlying feeling of avarice. He affected the generous, but he knew what he was about. So, without accounting to him-

self for the changes in his manners, his attentions were curt, hard, and rough, like those of most men of business, when he thought Claes was ruined; and they became kind, bland, and almost servile, when he suspected that the labors of his cousin had come to a fortunate issue. Sometimes he viewed Margaret Claes as a young lady whom it would be impossible for a simple provincial notary to aspire to; sometimes he considered her as a poor girl who would think herself fortunate if he condescended to make her his wife. He was a provincial and a Fleming, without pretension; he was not destitute of devotedness or goodness; but he had an ingenuous kind of egotism which rendered his qualities incomplete, and foibles which injured his person.

At this moment Madame Claes remembered the adrupt manner in which the notary had spoken to her under the porch of St. Peter's, and remarked the change which her reply had wrought in his manner. She divined his thoughts, and cast a searching glance at her daughter, to try to read in her countenance her feelings towards her cousin; but she saw nothing but the most perfect indifference. After a few minutes, during which the conversation turned upon the common topics of the city, the master of the house came down from his chamber, where, for some minutes past, his wife had heard with inexpressible pleasure the creaking of boots upon the floor. His step, like that of a young, active man, announced a complete metamorphosis; and the

expectation which his appearance excited in Madame Claes was so great that she could scarcely conceal her tremor as he came down-stairs. Balthazar was dressed in the costume then in fashion. He wore well-polished top-boots, which showed a portion of his white silk stockings, blue cassimere small-clothes with gold buttons, a white flowered waistcoat, and a blue frock. He had shaved, combed his hair, perfumed his head, cut his nails, and washed his hands with such care that he no longer seemed the same man to those who had seen him a few moments before. Instead of an old man well-nigh crazy, his wife, his children, and the notary beheld a man of forty, whose affable, good-humored countenance was winning in the extreme. Even the fatigue and sufferings betrayed by his thinness and the adhesion of the skin to the bones, had a sort of grace.

"How do you do, Pierquin?" said Balthazar Claes.

Having become a father and husband again, the chemist took his youngest child from his wife's lap, and tossed him up and down with the greatest glee.

"Look at the little fellow!" said he to the notary. "Does not such a pretty creature give you an inclination to get married? Take my word for it, my dear sir, family joys are a consolation for everything. Up! up! up!" said he, tossing Jean as high as he could reach. "Down! down! down!" he cried, as he brought him to the ground again.

The child screamed with laughter at finding itself alternately touching the ceiling and the floor. The

poor mother turned away her eyes to conceal the emotion caused by a game so simple in appearance, but which was an entire domestic revolution to her.

"Now let us see how you can run," said Balthazar, placing the child upon the floor, and throwing himself into an arm-chair. The child ran to his father, attracted by the glitter of the gold buttons which fastened the knees of his small clothes above his boots. "You are a darling!" said Balthazar, kissing him, "you are a true Claes, you stand straight when you walk. Well, Master Gabriel, how is Father Morillon?" said he, to his eldest son, taking him by the ear and shaking it. "Do you wage a fierce war against your themes and translations? Do you peg away hard at your mathematics?"

Balthazar rose, went towards Pierquin, and said to him with that bland courtesy which characterized him, "Have you anything to say to me, my dear sir?" He offered him his arm, drawing him towards the garden, adding, "Come and look at my tulips."

Madame Claes watched her husband as he went out, and could not contain her joy at seeing him so young, so affable, so like himself once more; she rose, put her arms around her daughter's waist, and embraced her, saying:

"My dear Margaret, my beloved child, I love you better to-day than ever."

"It is a long time since we have seen papa so cheerful," she replied.

Lemulquinier came to announce that dinner was

ready. To prevent Pierquin's offering her his arm, Madame Claes took Balthazar's, and the family entered the dining-room.

This apartment, the ceiling of which was composed of visible beams, washed and varnished every year, was furnished with high oaken side-boards, upon the shelves of which stood the most curious pieces of patrimonial plate. The walls were tapestried with violet-colored leather, upon which hunting subjects were stamped in gold. Over the side-boards, here and there carefully disposed, shone the feathers of curious birds and rare shells. The chairs had not been changed since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and presented that square form, those twisted columns, and that little back covered with fringed stuff, which constituted a fashion so universal that Raphael illustrated it in his Madonna della Seggiola. The wood had become black; but the gilded nails shone as if they were new, and the cloths, carefully renewed, were of a bright red color.

Flanders was entirely revived with its Spanish innovations. The flagons and decanters upon the tables had that respectable air which is communicated by the rounded bellies of the antique style. The glasses were those high-stemmed affairs that are seen in all Flemish and Dutch pictures. The service of stone ware, ornamented with figures and colored after the manner of Bernard de Palissy, was of the English manufacture of Wedgewood. The plate was massive, square-faced, with prominent

reliefvos—family plate, all the pieces of which were of different patterns, both in fashion and form, attesting the commencement and progress of the fortunes of the Claeses. The napkins had fringes, a style quite Spanish. As to the table-linen, every one will suppose that with the Claeses the point of honor consisted in possessing the most superb. This service and this plate were intended for the daily use of the family. The front house, in which banquets were given, had its own peculiar splendor, the wonders of which, reserved for gala days, stamped them with that solemnity which invariably disappears when things become common from habitual use. In the back-quarter, everything bore the stamp of patriarchal simplicity. Lastly—charming feature of the room—a magnificent vine ran along the whole outside, and with its leaves and branches encircled every window.

"You remain faithful to our traditions, madame," said Pierquin, on receiving a plate of thyme soup—a dish in which Flemish and Dutch cooks put little balls of force-meat with slices of toast—"for this was the Sunday soup of our forefathers. Your house and that of my uncle Des Raquets are now the only ones where you can get this historical dish in all the Netherlands. Ah, I forget; old Monsieur Savaron de Savarus still takes pride in having it served at his house in Tournay, but everywhere else the customs of old Flanders are disappearing. Furniture nowadays must be in the Greek style; you see

nothing but helmets, bucklers, lances and fasces. Everybody is rebuilding his house, selling his old furniture, recasting his plate, or bartering it off for Sevres porcelain, which is not as good as old Saxon or as Chinese. As for me, I am a Fleming to the soul. My heart bleeds to see the hard-ware men buying up our old brass or tin-incrusted furniture, for the mere price of the wood. Society wants to change its skin, it seems to me. Even the artistic processes of our mechanics are disappearing. Where speed is the first condition of everything, of course nothing can be conscientiously done. At my last trip to Paris, I was taken to see the exhibition of paintings at the Louvre. I affirm, on my word of honor, that they looked like screens—pictures without atmosphere, without depth, and the painters seemed to have been afraid to put on any color. And they are trying, they say, to overturn our old school! Very probably!"

"Our old painters," returned Balthazar, "studied the various combinations and the power of resistance of colors, by subjecting them to the influence of the sun and the rain. But you are right; the material resources of the art are less cultivated nowadays than ever."

Madame Claes did not listen to the conversation. When she heard the notary say that porcelain had become fashionable, she conceived the brilliant idea of selling the heavy plate left her by her brother,

hoping to be thus able to pay her husband's debt of thirty thousand francs.

"Ah ha!" Balthazar was saying to the notary when Madame Claes again listened to the conversation, "so the people at Douay interest themselves in me and my labors, do they?"

"Yes," replied Pierquin, "everybody wonders what you are spending so much money about. Yesterday, I heard the chief justice regretting that a man like you should be hunting for the philosopher's stone. I took it upon myself to reply that you were too well-informed not to know that that would be undertaking the impossible, too good a Christian to hope to prevail over God, and, like all the Claeses, too shrewd a manager to exchange your hard money for sawdust. I must nevertheless confess that I shared the regrets expressed at your withdrawal from society. You really no longer belong to the town. You would assuredly have been delighted, madame, had you heard the praise that every one seemed eager to bestow upon you and Monsieur Claes."

"You have acted as a relative should, in repelling an imputation the very least evil of which would be to make me ridiculous," replied Balthazar. "So the Douaysians think me ruined! Very well, my dear Pierquin, two months hence, I will give a ball, in celebration of the anniversary of my marriage, the magnificence of which will restore me that regard which our dear countrymen always pay to wealth."

Madame Claes blushed deeply. This anniversary had been forgotten for two years. Like the madmen whose faculties glow with unusual lustre during their lucid intervals, Balthazar had never been so intellectual in his affection. He was assiduously attentive to his children, and his conversation sparkled with grace, wit, and readiness. This return of a father's tenderness, after so long an absence, was certainly the most delightful fete he could give his wife, for whom his words and his manner had recovered that constant sympathy of expression, which flows harmoniously from heart to heart, and proves a delicious reciprocity of sentiment.

Old Lemulquinier appeared to have grown young again; he came and went with unusual alacrity, for he believed in the accomplishment of his secret hopes. The change, so suddenly brought about in the manners of his master, was more significant to him than to Madame Claes. Where the family beheld happiness, the valet beheld fortune. By assisting Balthazar in his manipulations he had espoused his folly. Whether he had gathered the extent of his researches from the explanations which escaped the chemist when an experiment failed in his hands, or whether man's innate disposition for imitation had caused him to adopt the ideas of him in whose atmosphere he lived, Lemulquinier had conceived for his master a superstitious feeling, mingled with terror, admiration, and selfishness. The laboratory was to him what a lottery office is to the people—hope in an

organized form. Every night he went to bed, saying to himself: "To-morrow, perhaps, we shall swim in gold." And on the morrow, he awoke with a faith as lively as that of the day before.

His name indicated his purely Flemish origin. Formerly men of the people were only known by a designation derived from their trade, their country, their physical conformation or moral qualities. This designation became the name of the family founded by them on their attaining the condition of freemen. Dealers in linen thread were called *mulquiniers* in Flanders, and this had doubtless been the employment of the man who, among the old valet's ancestors, emerged from the condition of a serf to attain and hold that of a citizen, until their obscure misfortunes reduced the mulquinier's descendant to the state of a serf again, with the addition of wages, however. The history of Flanders, of its thread and its trade, was therefore summed up in this old servant, who, for the sake of euphony, was often called Mulquinier. His character and his physiognomy were not wanting in originality. His face, triangular in form, was broad, long, and scarred by the small-pox, which had given it a singular appearance, by leaving upon it a multitude of shiny white places. He was thin and tall, and had a grave, mysterious walk. His little eyes, orange-colored like the smooth yellow wig upon his head, never looked any one in the face. His external appearance was thus in harmony with the sentiment of curiosity he

excited. His employment as a chemical assistant—a man therefore initiated into his master's secrets—and his silence in regard to them, invested him with a charm. The inhabitants of the rue de Paris beheld him pass along with mingled interest and fear, for, when questioned, his answers were always sybilline and big with treasures. Proud of being necessary to his master, he exercised a sort of vexatious authority over his fellow-servants, and profited by it, too, for his own advantage, by obtaining privileges which made him almost master of the house. Unlike Flemish domestics, who are usually very much attached to the family, he cared for no one but Balthazar. Did any affliction overtake Madame Claes, did any fortunate circumstance happen to the family, he eat his bread and butter and drank his beer with his ordinary indifference.

The dinner over, Madame Claes proposed that they should take their coffee in the garden, by the central group of tulips. The earthen pots in which they grew, with pieces of slate engraved with their names attached to them, had been buried and arranged in such a manner as to form a pyramid, at the top of which was a dragon's mouth tulip, the only one in Flanders. This flower, called *Tulipa Claesiana*, contained the seven colors, and its long indented leaves seemed gilded upon the edge. Balthazar's father, who had several times refused ten thousand florins for it, was so anxious that a single seed of it should not be stolen, that he kept it in

the parlor, and often passed whole days in gazing at it. The stalk was enormous, very straight, firm, and of a splendid green; the proportions of the plant were in harmony with the calix, the colors of which were distinguished by that brilliant, sharp clearness, which formerly gave such a value to these aristocratic flowers.

"Why, here are tulips to the value of thirty or forty thousand francs!" said the notary, looking alternately at Madame Claes and the many-colored pyramid. Madame Claes was too much fascinated by the sight of the flowers, which in the rays of the setting sun resembled glittering gems, to catch the bearing of the notary's observation.

"What is the use of all this?" continued Pierquin, now addressing Balthazar, "you ought to sell them."

"Bless me, I'm not in want of money!" replied Claes, with the gesture of a man to whom forty thousand francs were a mere trifle.

A few moments of silence followed, only broken by the exclamations of the children.

"Look, mamma! look at this."

"Oh, what a beautiful one this is!"

"What is the name of this one?"

"What an abyss for human reason!" cried Balthazar, raising his hands, and clasping them as if in despair. "A mere combination of hydrogen and oxygen, by means of a simple difference in the proportions, produces, in the same medium and by one

common principle, these various colors, each of which, of course, constitutes a different result."

His wife heard plainly enough the words of this proposition, which was too rapidly enunciated to allow her to comprehend it perfectly. Balthazar remembered that she had studied his favorite science, and said, making a mysterious sign: "You can't yet understand what I mean, you know." And he appeared to sink again into one of those meditations which had become so habitual to him.

"I thought so," said Pierquin, taking a cup of coffee from the hands of Margaret. "Drive nature away and it returns at full gallop," added he, in a low voice, to Madame Claes. "You will have the goodness to speak to him yourself, the devil could not draw him out of his reverie. He'll stay so till to-morrow."

He bade adieu to Claes, who pretended not to hear him, kissed little Jean, whom his mother held in her arms, and, after making a profound general bow, retired. When the front door was heard to close, Balthazar clasped his wife round the waist, and dispelled the uneasiness his feigned reverie had naturally caused her, whispering in her ear:—"I knew how to get rid of him."

Madame Claes turned her face towards her husband, and was not ashamed to let him see the tears which filled her eyes; they were so sweet! She laid her head upon Balthazar's shoulder, and allowed Jean to slide down to the ground.

"Let us go into the parlor again," she said, after a pause.

During the whole evening Balthazar was exuberantly gay. He invented a thousand games for his children, and played his own part so well that he did not perceive that his wife several times left the room. At half-past nine, after Jean had gone to bed, Margaret, on returning from helping Felicie undress, found her mother seated in her large arm-chair, talking with her father, her hands clasped in his. She was afraid of interrupting them, and was about to retire without speaking; but her mother observed her, and said:—"Come here, Margaret, come, my dear!" Then drawing her towards her, she kissed her affectionately on the brow, adding:—"Carry your book to your chamber, and go to bed early."

"Good-night, my dear daughter!" said Balthazar.

Margaret embraced her father, and then left them. Claes and his wife remained for a few moments alone, occupied in watching the last tints of twilight expire amid the dim foliage of the garden, whose outlines were now scarcely perceptible. When it was almost night, Balthazar said to his wife, in an agitated tone:—"Let us go up."

Long before English manners had consecrated a woman's chamber as a sacred place, that of a Flemish wife had been impenetrable. The good housewives of the country did not do this as a display of virtue; it was a habit contracted in their infancy, a domestic superstition which made a bed-chamber a delicious

sanctuary, redolent of the tenderer sentiments, where simplicity united with the sweetest and holiest elements of social life. In the peculiar position of Madame Claes, any woman would have sought to surround herself with the most elegant things; but she had done so with exquisite taste, knowing the influence exerted upon our feelings by the aspect of the objects about us. This would have been a luxury with a pretty woman, with her it was a necessity. She understood the bearing of the words: "a woman makes herself pretty;" a maxim which controlled all the actions of Napoleon's first wife, and often rendered her insincere, while Madame Claes was always natural and true. Though Balthazar was well acquainted with his wife's chamber, his oblivion of the material facts of life had been so complete, that, on entering it, he experienced a thrill, as if he now saw it for the first time. The sumptuous gaiety of a victorious woman was displayed in the splendid colors of the tulips that stretched forth from the long necks of skilfully arranged China porcelain vases, and in the profusion of lights, the effect of which can only be compared to that of a joyous flourish of trumpets. The glow of the tapers gave a harmonious brilliancy to the drab silk furniture, the monotony of which was relieved by gold reflections from certain articles in the room, and by the various colors of the flowers, which looked like sheaves of gems.

The secret of all these preparations was Balthazar,

still Balthazar! Josephine could not possible assure her husband more eloquently that he was still the source of her joys and her sorrows. The aspect of this chamber threw the mind into a state of delicious calm, and banished every melancholy thought, leaving nothing but a feeling of equable and pure contentment. The stuff of the hangings, purchased in China, shed around that soft, sweet odor, which penetrates the senses without fatiguing them. The curtains, carefully drawn, betrayed a desire for solitude, a jealous intention of keeping to herself the least word, and to imprison the very looks of her reconquered husband. Adorned with her own beautiful black hair, glossy and smooth, which fell down upon her shoulders like two wings of the raven, Madame Claes, wrapped in a dressing-gown which came up to her neck, to which was added a long pelerine, richly trimmed with lace, went and drew the tapestry over the door, thus excluding all noise from without. As she returned, she gave her husband, who was seated near the fire-place, one of those joyous smiles by which an intelligent woman, whose soul sometimes illumines her countenance, will impart irresistible hopes. A woman's greatest charm consists in a constant appeal to the generosity of man, in a graceful acknowledgment of her weakness, by which she gratifies his pride, and awakens the most exalted feelings. Is not the confession of weakness compatible with the most magical fascinations?

"'COME HERE, MARGARET; COME, MY DEAR!"—*See Page* 94.

When the rings of the curtain had silently run along their wooden rod, she turned towards her husband, and for an instant appeared to try to conceal her personal defects by leaning on a chair, so as to seem to move without effort. This was an appeal to her husband. Balthazar, for a moment lost in the contemplation of the olive-complexioned face which the grey back-ground threw into such beautiful relief, attracting and satisfying the eye, rose and carried his wife to the sofa. This was precisely what she wanted.

"You promised me," she said, taking his hand and holding it between her electrifying palms, "to admit me to the secret of your researches. You must acknowledge, love, that I am worthy of knowing it, for I have had the courage to study a science that the Church condemns, in order to be able to understand you; but I am inquisitive, so don't try to hide anything. Tell me by what chance you arose one morning gloomy and contemplative, when I had left you so happy the night before?"

"So it is to talk about chemistry that you have dressed yourself so tastefully, is it?"

"My dear husband, is not receiving a confession which admits me closer to your heart, the greatest pleasure I can have, is it not a communion of souls which embraces and begets all the felicities of life? Your love has returned to me pure and intact, and I long to know what preoccupation has been powerful enough to deprive me of it so long. Yes, I am

more jealous of an idea than of all the women on the earth. Love is great, but it is not infinite; while Science has depths without limit, into which I cannot let you plunge alone. I hate whatever comes between us. Were you to obtain the glory you are striving after, I should be unhappy; yet would it not give you the liveliest delight? No sir, I alone ought to be the source of your pleasures."

"It was not an idea, my angel, but a man, who put me upon this new and splendid path."

"A man!" she exclaimed in terror.

"Don't you remember, Pepita, a Polish officer whom we entertained in 1809?"

"Can I ever forget him?" she returned. "I have often been vexed with my own memory for so persistently reminding me of those two eyes so like tongues of fire, those hollows above his eyebrows where glowed the very coals of hell, that broad bald skull, that turned-up moustache, that angular, haggard face! Had there been a spare room in any of the inns, he should not have slept beneath our roof."

"The name of this Polish gentleman was Adam de Wierzechownia," Balthazar resumed. "When you left us alone in the parlor, at evening, we began accidentally to talk of chemistry. Torn by want from the study of that science, our Pole had become a soldier. I think it was by means of a glass of sugar and water that we recognized each other as adepts. When I told Lemulquinier to bring me some sugar in

lumps, the captain asked, with a gesture of surprise, 'Have you studied chemistry?' 'With Lavoisier,' I replied. 'You are very fortunate to be rich and your own master,' he exclaimed. And there burst from his chest one of those sighs which betray a world of sorrows hidden beneath the brow or imprisoned within the heart—it was something too ardent and concentrated for words to express. His meaning was completed by a glance that absolutely froze me.

After a pause, he told me that as Poland was in a manner extinct, he had taken refuge in Sweden. There he had sought for consolation in the study of chemistry, for which he had always had an irresistible passion. 'Well,' he added, 'I see that you have discovered, like me, that gum Arabic, sugar, and starch, reduced to powder, yield absolutely the same substance, and, upon analysis, give the same *qualitative* result.' He paused again, and after having gazed searchingly at me, he spoke to me confidentially, and in a low voice; the general sense of his words alone remains in my memory; but he uttered them with a depth of voice, with a warmth of inflexion and a force of gesture, which stirred my very bowels and struck my understanding as a sledge-hammer strikes the iron on the anvil. I will give you an outline of the arguments which, to me, were the coal that God laid upon Isaiah's tongue, for my studies with Lavoisier enabled me fully to comprehend their bearing.

"'Sir,' said he, 'the similarity of those three substances, in appearance so distinct, has led me to think that all the productions of nature must have one common principle. The researches of modern chemistry have proved the truth of this law, as regards the more considerable portion of natural effects. Chemistry divides the entire creation into two distinct parts: organic and inorganic nature. Organic nature is certainly the most important portion of our world, if we include in it all those vegetable and animal creations which exhibit a more or less perfect organization, or, to be more precise, a greater or less capacity for motion, which determines their greater or less feeling. Now, analysis has reduced the products of this organic nature to four simple bodies, three of which are gases, azote, hydrogen and oxygen, and one of which is a simple, non-metallic, solid body, namely, carbon. On the other hand, inorganic nature, with its inconsiderable variety, with its incapacity for either motion or feeling, and to which we may safely deny that gift of growth which Linnæus rather hastily conceded it, reckons fifty-three simple bodies, different combinations of which form all its products. Now, is it likely that the means are more numerous where the ends are less numerous? The opinion of my old master is, that these fifty-three bodies have one common principle, modified in other days by a power now extinct, but which human genius is destined to revive.

"'Now suppose for a moment that the activity of

this power be re-awakened, we should have a unitary chemistry. Both organic and inorganic chemistry would probably rest upon four principles, and if we were to succeed in decomposing azote, which we must consider a negation, we should have but three. Here we are, then, close to the great Ternary of the ancients and of the alchemists of the Middles Ages, at whom we are wrong to laugh. Modern chemistry is not yet anything else. It is at once much and little. It is much, for chemistry is accustomed to recoil from no obstacle or difficulty. It is little, when we compare it with what remains to be done. Chance has greatly aided our beautiful science. For instance, the diamond, that tear of pure crystallized carbon, did it not seem the very last substance it was possible to create? The ancient alchemists, who thought gold could be decomposed and consequently made, shrunk from the idea of producing the diamond; we have nevertheless discovered the nature and law of its composition. As for me, I have gone farther still! An experiment has convinced me that the mysterious Ternary, which has occupied mankind from time immemorial, will not be found in our present analyses, which have no tendency towards one fixed point. But first for the experiment:

"'Take some cress-seed (to choose one substance from the grand stores of organic nature) and sow them in a bed of some precipitate of sulphur (to choose a simple body again.) Moisten the seed with

distilled water, so that no foreign body may enter into the product of the germination. The seeds swell and grow in a medium perfectly known to us, nourished only by principles equally known to us by analysis. Cut the stalks of the plants from time to time, and keep them, so that you may have enough to yield a considerable weight of ashes, when you burn them, and that you may be able to operate upon a certain quantity. Very well; now analyze these ashes, and you will find the same substances precisely as if the cress had grown in earth, at the edge of the brook—namely, silicic acid, alumina, phosphate and carbonate of lime, carbonate of magnesia, sulphate and carbonate of potassium, and oxide of iron. Now these substances existed neither in the sulphur, a simple body which served as soil to the plant, nor in the water used in irrigation, the composition of which is known; but as they did not exist in the seed either, we cannot explain these presence in the plant, unless we suppose an element common to the bodies contained in the cress, and to those used as a medium. Thus, the atmosphere, the distilled water, the precipitate of sulphur, and the substances yielded by an analysis of the ashes, that is to say, the potassium, the lime, the magnesia, the alumina, must have a common principle floating in the atmosphere, as the sun makes it. From this incontrovertible experiment,' he cried, 'I have deduced the existence of the Absolute, a substance common to all created things, modified by

one single force; such is the position, distinct and palpable, of the problem presented by the Absolute —one which to me seems *solvable*. There you will meet the mysterious Ternary, before which humanity has fallen on its knees since the world began:—the raw material, the means, the end. You will find the terrible number Three in every human thing; it controls Religion, Science and Law.

"'At this point,' he continued, 'war and poverty tore me from my studies.' You are a pupil of Lavoisier, you are rich and master of your time. I can therefore make you the confidant of my conjectures. This is the object which my personal experience has enabled me to catch a glimpse of. ONE MATTER must be the principle common to the three gases and to carbon. The MEANS must be the principle common to negative and positive electricity. Go bravely in search of the proofs necessary to establish these two truths, and you will have the supreme explanation of every effect in nature. Oh, sir, when a man carries there,' he cried, striking his forehead, 'the solution of the enigma of creation, by divining the Absolute, can it be called living to be dragged along amid those mobs of men who rush upon each other at a given moment, without knowing what they are doing? My present life is precisely the inverse of a dream. My body goes and comes, acts, exists, in the midst of fire, cannon and men, and traverses the continent of Europe at the pleasure of a power which I obey while I despise it.

My soul has no consciousness of these acts, it remains fixed, plunged in one idea, indurated, ossified by that idea—the search for the Absolute! A principle by which seeds, in every respect alike, planted in the same spot, produce, these a white calix, those a yellow calix! A phenomenon likewise applicable to silk-worms, which, fed upon the same leaves and formed without apparent difference, produce, these white silk, those yellow silk! Equally applicable to man himself who often has, legitimately, too, children who resemble neither the father nor the mother! Does not a logical deduction from this fact imply, involve, an explanation of all effects of nature?

"'What, indeed, is more consistent with our idea of God than to believe that all the works of his hand were produced by the simplest means? The Pythagorean worship of the ONE, from which the other numbers flow and which represents the ONE MATTER: the worship of the TWO, the first aggregation and the type of all the others: the worship of the THREE, which, from time immemorial, has symbolized God—that is to say, Matter, Power, and the Result; was not this worship the sum of all that was traditionally and confusedly known of the Absolute? Stahl, Becher, Paracelsus, Agrippa, all the great seekers for occult causes, had the Trismegistus, which means the Grand Ternary, for their rallying cry. The ignorant, accustomed to condemn Alchemy, that transcendent chemistry, are doubtless unaware that we are striving to justify the passionate investi-

gations of those great men! The Absolute discovered, I should have grappled with Motion. Ah! While I am living on gunpowder, and commanding men to rush uselessly to their death, my old master is heaping discovery on discovery, he is flying towards the Absolute! As for me, I shall die like a dog in the corner of some battery!'

"When this poor great man had somewhat recovered his calmness, he said with a sort of touching fraternity, 'If I hit upon an experiment worth making, I will leave it to you by will before I die.' Pepita," continued Balthazar, pressing his wife's hand, "tears of rage streamed down this man's face, while he communicated to my soul the fire of this argument, one which Lavoisier had already timidly constructed, without daring to give himself up to it."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Claes who could refrain no longer from interrupting her husband, "this man, then, by passing one single night beneath our roof, robbed us of your affection, and destroyed, by one sentence, by one word, the happiness of a family! Oh, my dear Balthazar, did he make the sign of the cross? Did you examine him well? The Tempter alone could have that yellow eye which darts forth the Promethean fire! Yes, the demon alone could have torn you from me! Since that day, you have been neither father, nor husband, nor the head of a family."

"So," said Balthazar, raising himself to his full

height and casting a piercing look upon his wife, "you blame your husband for elevating himself above other men, that he may lay the divine mantle of glory at your feet—a trifling offering compared to the treasures of your heart! It's plain you don't know what I have done during the last three years! I have taken giant steps, Pepita," he said, with increasing animation. His face seemed to his wife more glorious with the fire of genius than it had ever been with the fire of love, and she wept as she listened to him. "I have combined chlorine and azote; I have decomposed bodies which were before considered simple; I have discovered new metals. Why, Pepita," he added, on seeing his wife's tears, "I have decomposed tears. A tear contains a little phosphate of lime and chloride of sodium, some mucus and a trifle of water."

He went on without noticing the terrible convulsions which distorted Josephine's features; he was mounted upon Science, which bore him off, on outspread wings, far from the visible world.

"This analysis, my dear, is one of the strongest proofs of the system of the Absolute. All life implies combustion. According to the greater or less activity of the internal heat, life is more or less tenacious. Thus, the destruction of a mineral is indefinitely retarded, because combustion in it is virtual, latent, or insensible. Thus, too, vegetables, which are constantly refreshed by a combination producing moisture, may live any length of time, and

several specimens, contemporary with the last flood, are still in existence. But whenever nature has perfected an organization, and, for some purpose unknown to us, has furnished it with feeling, instinct, or intelligence—three marked degrees in an organic system—these three organisms require a combustion the activity of which is in exact proportion to the result obtained. Man, who represents the highest degree of intelligence, and who offers us the only organization producing a half-creative power, namely, *thought*, is the being chosen from the whole animal creation, in which combustion is found in the most intense activity ; its most powerful effects are in a manner revealed by the phosphates, carbonates and sulphates that his body yields when analyzed. May not these substances be the traces left by the action of the electric fluid, the principle of all fructification ? Does not electricity manifest itself in man in more varied forms than in any other animal ? Must he not have greater faculties than any other creature, to absorb larger portions of the absolute principle, and must he not assimilate them to himself, in order to make from them, in his more perfect mechanism, his force and his ideas? I think so. Man is a cucurbit.* Thus, in my opinion, the idiot is a man whose brain contains the smallest proportion of phosphorus or any other electro-magnetic

* An-egg shaped chemical vessel, employed in distillations, evaporations, sublimations, &c.—[*Translators.*

product, the madman the one whose brain contains too much of it, the ordinary man the one who has but little, the man of genius the one whose brain is just sufficiently saturated with it. The man continually in love, the porter, the dancer, the great eater, are those who displace the force accruing from their electric apparatus. In fact, our very feelings—"

"Enough, Balthazar, you frighten me, you are committing sacrilege! What! Is my love nothing but—"

"Disengaged etherial matter," returned Claes, "and doubtless the explanation of the Absolute. Just think that if I am the first to discover it, to discover it, to discover it!" As he uttered these words in three different intonations, his countenance gradually assumed the expression of inspiration. "I can make metals, diamonds. I can create nature over again!"

"And will you be the happier for it?" his wife cried in despair. "Accursed Science, demon of hell! You forget, Balthazar, that you are committing the sin of pride, the sin that Satan was called to answer for. You are invading the province of God!"

"Ha! ha! God!"

"He denies God!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "Claes, God possesses a power that you will never have."

"What power?" asked Claes, who, upon this argument which seemed to annihilate his beloved Science, looked tremblingly at his wife.

"The only existing power, Motion. I'll tell you what I have gathered from the various books you have forced me to read: You may analyze flowers, fruits, Malaga wine; you may doubtless discover their principles, which may be produced, like those of your cress, in a medium that seems foreign to them; you may, perhaps, find them in nature; but, by bringing their principles together, can you MAKE these flowers, these fruits, this Malaga wine? Can you work the incomprehensible effects of the sun? Can you supply the climate of Spain? Decomposing is not creating."

"If I discover the constraining force, I can create."

"Oh, nothing will stop him," cried Pepita, in accents of despair. "My love is killed, I have lost my love!" She burst into tears; her eyes, kindled by her grief and the sacredness of the feelings they expressed, beamed more beautifully than ever through her tears. "Yes," she continued, sobbing, "you are dead for me, dead for everything. Science is more powerful within you than yourself, I see; and its flight bears you so far aloft that you can never descend again to be the companion of a poor woman. What happiness can I offer you? Ah, could I but believe—a sad consolation—that God created you to manifest His works and sing His praises, that He placed in your breast this power that masters you! But no, God is good, he would have left you some thought for a wife who adores

you, for children whom it is your duty to protect. Yes, the demon only can aid you in walking alone amidst these labyrinths without issue, in this darkness where you are not enlightened by faith from above, but by a horrible belief in your own faculties! Otherwise, would you not have perceived that you have squandered nine hundred thousand francs in three years? Oh, do me justice, you who are my God on earth, I do not reproach you. If we were alone, I would bring you all my fortune on my knees, saying:—'Take it, cast it into your furnaces, make smoke of it.' I would laugh as I saw it dance in the air! If you were poor, I would beg without shame for means to procure you coal for your alembics. In short, if, by throwing myself into your furnace, I could help you to find your execrable Absolute, Claes, I would do it joyfully, since you place your glory and happiness in this yet undiscovered secret. But our children, Claes, our children! What will become of them, if you do not soon solve this infernal riddle? Do you know what Pierquin came for? He came for thirty thousand francs which you have not the means of paying. Your property is no longer your own. I told him you had the money, to spare you the embarrassment his questions would have caused you; but I thought of selling our old silver plate to discharge the debt."

She saw the eyes of her husband moisten, and she threw herself in a state of desperation at his feet, raising her clasped hands towards him.

"My love," she cried, "abandon your researches for a time; let us economize the money necessary for your resuming them at a future period, if you cannot renounce the pursuit. Oh! I do not condemn it, I will blow your furnaces myself if you wish it; but do not reduce our children to want; you can no longer love them, science has ravaged your heart, do not leave them a life of wretchedness instead of the happiness you owed them. The feelings of a mother have often been the weakest in my heart, yes, I have often wished I was not a mother, that I might unite myself more closely with your soul, with your very being! And now, to stifle my remorse, I must plead my children's cause with you before my own."

Her hair had escaped from its confinement and fell down upon her shoulders; her eyes flashed with a thousand emotions as with so many arrows; she triumphed over her rival. Balthazar lifted her up, carried her to the sofa, and fell at her feet.

"So I have made you unhappy, have I?" he said with the accent of a man awaking from a painful dream.

"My poor Claes, you will make us much more so, in spite of yourself," she said, passing her hand through his hair. "Come, sit down by me, here," she added, motioning him to a seat upon the sofa. "There, I've forgotten all about it, now that you have returned to us. Oh, we'll redeem everything yet, dearest, but you will not leave your wife again, will

you? Say you won't. My great, my noble Claes, let me still exert that feminine influence over your excellent heart which is so necessary to the happiness of artists toiling in obscurity and to disconsolate great men. You may treat me roughly, you may kill me if you will, but you will allow me to oppose you a little for your own good. I will never abuse the power you grant me. Be famous, but be happy too. Do not prefer chemistry to us. We will be indulgent, we will let Science share your heart with us, but be just and give us our half. Is not my disinterestedness sublime?"

This made Balthazar smile. With that wonderful tact that women possess, she had brought the loftiest of questions down to the province of pleasantry, where woman's rule is undisputed. Though she seemed to laugh, however, her heart was so violently contracted that it recovered its wonted regularity with no small difficulty; but when she saw Balthazar's eyes glowing once more with the expression which delighted her, which was her glory, and which told her that she had regained the power she thought lost forever, she said with a smile:

"Take my word for it, Balthazar, nature created us to feel, and though you would have us nothing but electrical machines, your gases and your etherial matter will never explain the gift we possess of vaguely discerning the future."

"Yes," he replied, "by affinities. The power of vision which makes the poet, and the power of deduc-

tion which makes the savant, are founded upon invisible, intangible and imponderable affinities, which the vulgar class among moral phenomena, but which are nothing but physical effects. The prophet sees and deduces. Unfortunately these species of affinities are too rare and too vague to be subjected to analysis or observation."

"This," she said, giving him a kiss to drive away the chemistry she had so unfortunately re-awakened, "is an affinity, is it?"

"No, it is a combination; two substances of the same sign produce no activity."

"Oh, hold your tongue, hold your tongue," she said, "you will kill me with grief. I cannot bear to see my rival in the very transports of your love."

"But my dear life, I think of nothing but you; my labors are for the glory of my family. You are the object of all my hopes."

"Am I? Then look at me."

This scene had rendered her as beautiful as a young woman; and of all her person her husband could see nothing but her head rising from a cloud of muslin and lace.

"Yes, I was wrong to abandon you for Science. Now, if I should ever again return to my pre-occupations,—well, Pepita, you shall drag me from them. I consent that it shall be so."

She cast down her eyes and allowed him to take her hand, her greatest beauty,—a hand at once delicate and powerful.

"Ay, but I require more," she said.

"You are so charmingly beautiful that you may ask for anything."

"Well, I want to destroy your laboratory and chain your Science," she said, with the fire of love beaming from her eyes.

"Be it so; chemistry may go to the devil!"

"This moment wipes out all my sorrows," she replied. "Now make me suffer as much as you like."

The tears gushed from Balthazar's eyes. "Oh, you were right! I only saw you through a veil, and I no longer heard your voice."

"If I only had been concerned," she said, "I would have continued to suffer in silence without raising my voice before my sovereign; but your sons demand consideration, Claes. I assure you, that if you continue to dissipate your fortune thus, however glorious your object may be, the world will give you no credit for it, and its censure would fall upon your children. Should it not be enough for you, a man of so lofty views, that your wife has drawn your attention to a danger you did not perceive? But let us speak no more of this," she said, with a bantering smile and glance. "To-night, Claes, we will not be happy by halves."

The day following this evening so eventful in the history of this family, Balthazar Claes, who had doubtless made Josephine a promise relative to the cessation of his researches, did not visit his labora-

tory, but remained with her all day. On the morrow, the family made preparations to go to the country, where they stayed two months, and whence they returned to the city for the single purpose of arranging for the festivity which Claes desired, as of yore, to give in celebration of his marriage. He now daily obtained fresh proofs of the entanglement of his affairs, the result of his chemical studies and of his neglect. Far from making matters worse by remarks, his wife was sure to find palliatives for such evils as were beyond redemption. Of the seven domestics employed by Claes, at the time of his last reception, there remained only Lemulquinier, Josette the cook, and an old chamber-maid named Martha, who had never quitted her mistress since she left the convent; it was therefore impossible to receive the distinguished society of the city with so few servants. Madame Claes removed all difficulties by proposing to summon a cook from Paris, to train their gardener's son to service, and to borrow Pierquin's domestic. In this way, no one would notice the reduced state of their affairs.

During the twenty days that the preparations lasted, Madame Claes skilfully managed to occupy her husband's idleness; now she commissioned him to choose the flowers to decorate the grand staircase, the picture-gallery and the suite of rooms: then she sent him to Dunkirk to obtain specimens of those monstrous fish which form the glory of family tables in the department of the Nord. An

entertainment like that to be given by Claes was an important affair; it involved a multitude of cares and an active correspondence, in a country where reputation for hospitality is such an incentive to the honor of a family, that a dinner is looked upon, both by the masters and servants, as a victory they are to win over the guests. The oysters were from Ostend: the grouse were ordered in Scotland: the fruits were sent from Paris: in short the very least accessory was in keeping with the patrimonial luxury of the house. Besides, the annual ball given by the Claeses had a sort of celebrity. Douay being then the shire-town of the department, this entertainment in a manner opened the winter season, and set the fashion for all those of the country round about. So, for fifteen years, Balthazar had endeavored to distinguish himself, and had succeeded so well that stories were told, in a circle of twenty miles, of the dresses, the guests, the smallest details, the novelties which had been seen there and the events which had come to pass.

These preparations prevented Claes from thinking of his search for the Absolute. On returning to his domestic habits and to social life, he recovered his self-love as a man, a Fleming, and the head of a family, and took pleasure in astonishing the country. He sought to give a character to the ball by some new feature, and he chose from among his luxurious fancies the prettiest, the richest, and the most evanescent: he made his house a grove of choice

plants, and arranged bunches of flowers for the ladies. The other accessories of the evening corresponded with this novel piece of extravagance, and nothing seemed likely to destroy its effect. But the twenty-ninth bulletin and private intelligence of the disasters experienced by the grand army in Russia and at the Beresina, were circulated after dinner. A deep and genuine sadness took possession of the Douaysians, who, from patriotic motives, unanimously refused to dance. Among the letters from Poland, there was one for Balthazar. M. de Wierzchownia, then at Dresden, where, he said, he was dying of a wound received in one of the late engagements, was desirous of bequeathing to his host several ideas which, since their meeting, had occurred to him relative to the Absolute. This letter plunged Claes into a profound reverie which did honor to his patriotism; but his wife was not deceived by it. To her, the ball had a double aspect of mourning. So that the entertainment, in which the house of Claes emitted its last rays of glory, was in a degree sad and gloomy, in the midst of the magnificence and the accumulated curiosities of six generations, each one of which had had its passion, and which the Douaysians now admired for the last time.

Margaret, now sixteen years old, and introduced by her parents to society on this occasion, was the belle of the evening. She attracted every eye by her extreme simplicity, by her ingenuous manners,

and above all by the harmony of her appearance with the house she lived in. She was the genuine Flemish girl, as the painters have represented her; her head was perfectly round and full; her chestnut hair was smoothed over her brow and divided into two bandeaus; her eyes were grey, tinged with green; her arms were superb; her embonpoint did not at all diminish her beauty; her manner was timid, but upon her smooth, lofty forehead, great firmness was concealed beneath apparent evenness and sweetness of temper. Though she was neither reserved nor melancholy, she seemed but little disposed to gaiety. The habit of reflection, the gift of order, the sentiment of duty—the three principal expressions of the Flemish character—animated a face cold at the first glance, but at which you were apt to look again, attracted by the grace of her features and by a subdued pride which gave assurance of domestic happiness. By a singularity not yet explained by the physiologists, she did not bear the slightest resemblance to either her father or her mother, but was the living image of her maternal great-grandmother, a Conyncks of Bruges, whose carefully preserved portrait bore witness to the likeness.

Supper gave some animation to the fete. Although the disasters of the army interdicted the amusement of dancing, no one thought they ought to exclude the pleasures of the table. The patriots retired early. The indifferent remained with a few card-

players and some of Claes' intimate friends; but gradually this brilliantly illuminated house, in which all the notabilities of Douay had assembled, was left in silence, and, towards one o'clock in the morning, the gallery was deserted, and the lights were extinguished from room to room. At length the court within, for a moment so brilliant, so animated, became once more dark and gloomy—a prophetic image of the prospect before the family. When the Claeses retired to their apartment, Balthazar gave his wife the Pole's letter to read. She returned it with a gesture of despair; she foresaw the future.

In fact, from that day Balthazar but ill disguised the sorrow and weariness that weighed upon his spirits. In the morning, after the family breakfast, he played for awhile with his son Jean, chatted a little with his daughters, who were busy sewing, embroidering, or making lace; but he soon grew tired of the play and the chat, appearing to acquit himself of a mere duty. When his wife came down again, after dressing, she found him still seated in the same arm-chair, apparently looking at Margaret and Felicie, without being disturbed by the rattle of their bobbins. When the newspaper came, he read it slowly, like a retired merchant who does not know how to kill time. Then he got up, looked at the sky through the windows, sat down again, and stirred the fire thoughtfully, like a man deprived of the consciousness of his movements by the tyranny of his ideas.

Madame Claes keenly regretted her defective education and her want of memory. It was difficult for her to sustain an interesting conversation for any length of time. This, indeed, is perhaps impossible between two beings who have said their say, and are obliged to seek for subjects of distraction outside of a life of the affections or their purely material existence. A life of the affections has its moments, and needs contrasts: the details of material existence will not long interest superior minds accustomed to prompt decisions: and society is insupportable to those that love. Two solitary beings who know each other thoroughly must seek their diversions in the lofty regions of thought, for it is impossible to offer what is small in exchange for what is immense. Again, when a man is accustomed to deal with grand and serious things, he becomes incapable of being amused, unless he has preserved that principle of innocence, in the depths of his heart, that simplicity, which renders men of genius so gracefully childish: but this infancy of the heart is a very rare phenomenon with those whose mission it is to see all things, to know all things, and to comprehend all things.

Madame Claes at first succeeded in this critical situation by unparalleled efforts, suggested by love or necessity. Once, she determined to learn backgammon, which she had never been able to play, but which, by a sufficiently intelligible miracle, she contrived to master. Then she interested Balthazar in the education of his daughters, and begged him to

lay out a course of reading for them. These resources were soon exhausted. There came at last a moment when Josephine, in presence of Balthazar, was like Madame de Maintenon in presence of Louis XIV.; but without having, to distract her listless master, either the pomp of power or the resources of a court,—a court skilled in playing such farces as that of the "Embassy from the King of Siam" or "the Sophie of Persia." The monarch, who, after having squandered France, was reduced to the expedients of an expectant heir to obtain money, was no longer either young or successful, and felt his frightful impotence in the midst of his grandeur; the royal nurse, who had always rocked the children well enough, did not succeed in rocking the father, who suffered for having trifled with men and things, with life and with God. But Claes suffered from too much power. Oppressed by an idea which clutched him closely, he dreamed of the pomp of Science, of wealth for the human race, of glory for himself. He suffered like an artist struggling with want, like Samson chained to the pillars of the temple. The effect was the same for these two sovereigns, though the intellectual monarch was crushed by his strength and the other by his weakness. What could Pepita do alone against this sort of scientific nostalgia?

After having exhausted the resources suggested by her household occupations, she called in society to her aid, by giving two cafés a week. At Douay cafés take the place of teas. A café is an assembly

in which, during a whole evening, the parties invited sip the exquisite wines and liquors with which the cellars of that comfortable country overflow; eat dainties, take clear coffee, or iced coffee and milk; whilst the woman sing ballads, discuss their toilettes, or talk over the interesting nothings of the town. Precisely as in the pictures of Mieris or Terburg, without the red feathers in the gray pointed hats, without the guitars and the beautiful costumes of the sixteenth century. But the efforts made by Balthazar properly to play his part of master of the house, his forced affability, the artificial fireworks of his wit, all revealed the depths of the disease by the fatigue to which he was a visible prey the next day.

These continual parties of pleasure—feeble palliatives—bore witness to the serious character of the malady. The branches at which Balthazar caught as he rolled down the precipice delayed his fall, but made it all the heavier. Though he never spoke of his former occupations, though he never expressed a regret as he felt how impossible it was, in his situation, to resume his experiments, he had all the dull movements, the feeble voice, the depression of a convalescent. His lassitude was sometimes evinced by his abstracted manner of taking the tongs, and building a fantastic pyramid in the fire with fragments of coal. When evening came, he was visibly pleased; sleep doubtless delivered him from his importunate thoughts. But he arose sadly on the

morrow, as he saw another day before him, and he seemed to measure the time he had to consume as the weary traveler does the desert he has to cross.

Though Madame Claes knew the cause of this languor, she wilfully refused to see the full extent of its ravages. Full of courage against the sufferings of the mind, she was powerless against the generosities of the heart. She did not dare to question Balthazar, as he listened to the prattle of his daughters or the merriment of little Jean, with the air of a man absorbed in his own thoughts; but she shuddered as she saw him struggle with his melancholy and courageously try to appear gay, that he might not depress those around him. The father's fitful attentions for his daughters or his gambols with Jean called the tears to Josephine's eyes; she left the room to conceal the emotion caused by a heroism the price of which women so fully realize, and which often breaks their hearts. Madame Claes would then be ready to exclaim, "Kill me, and do as you will!" Balthazar's eyes gradually lost their fire, and assumed that greenish tinge which is so painful in the eyes of the old. His attentions for his wife, his conversation, everything in him was slow and heavy. These symptoms, which became more alarming towards the close of April, terrified Madame Claes, to whom the spectacle was intolerable, and who had already reproached herself a thousand times, as she admired the Flemish fidelity with which Balthazar kept his word. One day,

when he appeared more prostrate than ever before, she no longer hesitated at any sacrifice to restore him to life.

"Balthazar," she said, "I release you from your oath."

He turned and gazed at her in astonishment.

"You are thinking of your experiments, are you not?" she asked.

He replied by a gesture of fearful vigor. Far from remonstrating with him, Madame Claes, who had had plenty of time to sound the abyss into which they were both to fall, took his hand and smilingly pressed it, saying: "Thanks, Claes, I am now sure of my power; you have sacrificed more than your life to me. It is now my turn to make a sacrifice! Though I have already sold a portion of my diamonds, there still remain enough, if I put those left by my brother with them, to obtain the money necessary for your labors. I intended them for ornaments for our daughters, but will not your glory furnish them with more dazzling gems? Besides, you will one day return them their diamonds more brilliant than ever."

The joy which instantly illumined her husband's face was the last drop in the cup of Josephine's despair; she saw with agony that his passion was stronger than himself. Claes had confidence in his undertaking, and could walk without trembling in a path which, to his wife, was a gulf. Thus, as he had faith, and she felt doubt, hers was the heaviest

burden; for women always suffer for two. At this period, she took pleasure in hoping for success, wishing to justify herself before her own conscience for her complicity in the probable destruction of their fortune.

"The devotion of a whole life would hardly suffice, Pepita," said Claes, moved to tears.

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when Margaret and Felicie entered, wishing them good day. Madame Claes cast down her eyes, and remained for a moment speechless before her children, whose fortune she had just sacrificed to a chimera; whilst her husband took them on his knees, and chatted gaily with them, happy to be able to diffuse the joy that oppressed him. Henceforth Madame Claes participated in the ardent life of her husband. The future of her children, the consideration of their father, were motives as powerful with her as glory and science were with Claes. Thus this unfortunate woman no longer had one hour of peace, when all the family diamonds had been sold at Paris by the instrumentality of the abbé de Solis, her spiritual adviser, and the manufacturers of chemicals had recommenced sending their packages. Incessantly agitated by the demon of Science and by the fury of research which consumed her husband, she lived in a state of continual apprehension, and remained like one dead for days together, nailed to her arm-chair by the very violence of her emotions, which, unlike Balthazar's, found no food in the labors

of the laboratory, and therefore tormented her soul by acting upon her doubts and fears. At times, reproaching herself for yielding to a passion whose object was unattainable, and which M. de Solis condemned, she would get up, walk to the window of the interior court, and gaze with terror at the chimney of the laboratory. If she saw smoke rising from it, she contemplated it with despair, the most contrary ideas agitating her heart and mind. She beheld the fortunes of her children melting away in smoke; but then she was saving the life of their father; was it not her first duty to render him happy? This last thought tranquilized her for a time.

She had obtained permission to enter the laboratory and remain there; but she was soon forced to abandon this melancholy satisfaction. She suffered too much in finding that Balthazar took no notice of her, and often seemed annoyed by her presence; she would then feel all the pangs of jealousy, and nurse a cruel inclination to blow up the very house; she well-nigh died of a thousand inconceivable miseries. Lemulquinier became a kind of barometer; if she heard him whistle as he came and went in serving breakfast or dinner, she guessed that her husband's experiments were favorable, and that he conceived hopes of approaching success. If Lemulquinier was silent and dull, she contemplated him with a look of sorrow; Balthazar was dissatisfied. The mistress and the servant finally understood each other

perfectly, notwithstanding the pride of the one and the lofty submission of the other. Weak and without defence against the terrible prostrations of her thoughts, Josephine succumbed to those alternations of hope and depression which, in her case, were rendered doubly oppressive by the inquietudes of the loving wife, and the anxieties of a mother trembling for her family. The desolating silence which formerly chilled her heart, she now shared, without being aware of the dullness which prevailed in the house, or of the days which glided away in the parlor without conversation, without a smile, often without a word. With melancholy maternal foresight, she accustomed her two daughters to the duties of housekeeping, and endeavored to make them acquainted with some occupations fit for women, that they might obtain a livelihood if they came to want. The apparent quiet of the family was a cover, therefore, for many painful uncertainties. Towards the end of the summer Balthazar had consumed the proceeds of the diamonds sold in Paris through the old abbé de Solis, and was again indebted to Protez and Chiffreville in the sum of twenty thousand francs.

In August, 1813, a year after the scene with which this history opens, Claes had made a few brilliant experiments, which, unfortunately, he despised, but his efforts had been without result as to the principal object of his researches. The day he finished the series of his labors, the consciousness of his impo-

tence crushed him; the certainty of having fruitlessly dissipated considerable sums filled him with despair. It was a terrible catastrophe. He left his garret, went down slowly to the parlor, threw himself into a chair in the midst of his children, and there remained, for some minutes, like one dead, without replying to the questions so hurriedly asked him by his wife. He felt his tears rising, and escaped to his chamber that he might have no witness of his grief. Josephine followed him thither, and led him into her own chamber, where, alone with her, Balthazar gave full vent to his despair. Those tears of a man, those exclamations of a discouraged artist, those regrets of the father of a family, had features of terror, of tenderness, of madness, which gave Madame Claes more pain than all her past sorrows had done. So the victim consoled the executioner. When Balthazar said, with a frightful accent of conviction: "Wretch that I am, I am gambling away my children's life and yours, I must kill myself to leave you happy!" the self-accusation went to her heart, and her knowledge of her husband's character led her to believe he would at once execute his threat; she experienced one of those revulsions which disturb life at its source, and which was all the more fatal from the fact that Pepita restrained its violence by assuming a forced tranquillity.

"My dear," she replied, "I have consulted, not Pierquin, whose friendship for us is hardly so great as to prevent his feeling a secret pleasure in seeing

us ruined, but an old man, who is as kind as a father to me. The abbé de Solis, my confessor, has given me advice that may save us from ruin. He has been to see your pictures and thinks that the value of those in the gallery will pay off the mortgages on your property, and acquit your debt to Protez and Chiffreville; for you are no doubt indebted to them."

Claes made an affirmative sign by hanging down his head, the hair of which had become quite white.

"M. de Solis is acquainted with the Happs and Dunckers of Amsterdam; they are crazy for pictures, and anxious, as parvenus always are, to make a display which old families can alone afford; they would give the full value for ours. By this means we can recover our revenues, and from the amount, which will not be far from a hundred thousand ducats, you can take a portion and continue your experiments. Your two daughters and I will be contented with a pittance. With time and economy we shall fill the empty frames with other pictures, and you shall be happy!"

Balthazar raised his countenance towards his wife, with a mixture of joy and fear. Their respective parts were changed, the wife became the protectress of the husband. This man, so tender, so devotedly attached to Josephine, held her closely clasped in his arms without perceiving the horrible convulsion which shortened her breath, and agitated her lips and hair with nervous tremors.

"I did not dare to tell you that between me and

the Absolute there is scarcely a hair's breadth left. To gasify metals nothing more is needed than to discover a means of subjecting them to an immense heat in a medium where the pressure of the atmosphere is null, that is, in an absolute vacuum."

Madame Claes could not endure the egotism of this reply. She expected passionate thanks for her sacrifice, and received a chemical problem. She broke from her husband, went down to the parlor, sank into her chair between her two terrified daughters, and burst into tears. Margaret and Felicie each took a hand, knelt down beside her, weeping with her, without knowing the cause of her grief, and asking repeatedly: "What is the matter, dear mother?"

"My poor children! I am dying—I feel I am!"

This reply alarmed Margaret, who, for the first time, perceived upon her mother's countenance that pallor peculiar to persons of a dark complexion.

"Martha! Martha!" cried Felicie; "come! mamma wants you!"

The old duenna hastened from the kitchen, and on beholding the greenish paleness of her mistress' slightly brown and highly colored countenance—"Body of Christ!" she cried, in Spanish, "Madame is dying!"

She flew out of the room, told Josette to heat some water for a foot-bath instantly, and then returned to her mistress.

"Do not alarm your master; tell him nothing

about it, Martha!" cried Madame Claes. "Poor dear girls!" she added, pressing Margaret and Felicie to her heart, with a gesture of despair, "would that I could live to see you happily married! Martha," she continued, after a pause, "tell Lemulquinier to go to M. de Solis, and beg him from me to come here."

This thunder-clap necessarily had an echo in the kitchen. Josette and Martha, both of whom were devoted to Madame Claes and her daughters, were stricken in the only affection they had. The terrible words: "Madame is dying—master has killed her! be quick! a mustard bath!" drew several interjectional expressions from Josette, intended for Lemulquinier. The latter, cold and insensible, was seated eating at the corner of a table before one of the windows, through which the kitchen, which was as neatly kept as the boudoir of a coquette, was lighted from the court.

"It was sure to come to this," said Josette, looking at the valet, and getting upon a stool to reach a kettle which shone like gold, down from a shelf. "There isn't a mother alive who could look coolly on and see a father amusing himself by fricasseeing a fortune like master's, to make sausage meat of."

Josette, whose head, tied up in a round cap with ruches, resembled that of a German nut-cracker, glanced at Lemulquinier with a look of bitterness which the green hue of her little red-lidded eyes made almost venomous. The old valet shrugged

his shoulders in a style worthy of Mirabeau in a pet, and crammed his yawning mouth with a piece of bread spread with butter and chopped onions.

"Instead of bothering her husband, madame ought to give him money, we should soon be rich enough to swim in gold. There's only the thickness of a copper liard between us and—"

"Well, then, why don't you offer him the twenty thousand francs you've got saved up? He's your master! If you are so sure of his doings—"

"You know nothing about the matter, Josette; there, go and boil your water, my good woman," interrupted the Fleming.

"I know enough about it to know that there were a thousand marks worth of silver here, and that you and your master have melted them, and if you are allowed to go on, you'll leave us without a rag to our backs."

"And master," said Martha, coming up, "will kill our mistress to get rid of a woman who holds him back and keeps him from making away with all his property. He's possessed with a devil, that's clear. The very least you risk in aiding him, Mulquinier, is your soul, if you've got one, for you stand there like a lump of ice, while everything here is in desolation. The young ladies are weeping like Magdalens. Come, run for the abbé de Solis."

"I've got something to do for master, I'm going to tidy up the laboratory," returned the valet. "It's

too far from here to the Esquerchin neighborhood. Go yourself."

"Did you ever see such a monster!" said Martha. "Who'll give madame her foot-bath? Do you want me to leave her to die? All her blood has gone to her head."

"Mulquinier," said Margaret, coming into the room adjoining the kitchen, "as you come back from Monsieur de Solis', ask Dr. Pierquin to come to us immediately."

"Ah! Now you'll go," said Josette.

"Mademoiselle, master told me to arrange the laboratory," said Lemulquinier, turning towards the women, at whom he gazed with the air of a despot.

"Father," said Margaret to Claes, who came down-stairs at this moment, "can't you spare us Mulquinier to go an errand to the city?"

"You'll go, you ugly Chinaman," said Martha, on seeing Claes place Lemulquinier at his daughter's orders.

The feeble attachment of the valet for the family was the great subject of dispute between the two women and Lemulquinier, whose indifference had greatly exalted the affection of Josette and the duenna. This quarrel, apparently so insignificant, had a great influence upon the destiny of the family, when, at a later period, they were in need of aid in their misfortunes.

Balthazar now became abstracted again, and did not notice Josephine's sickly condition. He took

Jean upon his knees and tossed him mechanically up and down, meditating upon the problem which he now believed he had the power to solve. He saw the foot-bath brought to his wife, who was not strong enough to leave the chair in which she was lying, and had remained in the parlor. He even saw his daughters waiting upon their mother, without asking the cause of their attentions and zeal. When Margaret or Jean started to speak, Madame Claes bade them be silent, pointing to Balthazar. A scene like this was of a nature to give Margaret food for reflection, who, placed as she was between her father and mother, considered herself old and reasonable enough to judge their conduct. There comes a time, in the domestic history of families, when the children become, voluntarily or involuntarily, the judges of their parents. Madame Claes saw the danger of this situation. Out of love for Balthazar, she sought to justify, in Margaret's eyes, what was very likely to appear, in the impartial mind of a girl of sixteen, an error in her father. The profound respect which Madame Claes paid Balthazar in these circumstances, by sacrificing herself, that she might not disturb his meditations, impressed them with a terrible idea of the paternal majesty. But this sacrifice of self, contagious as it was, still further increased Margaret's admiration for her mother, with whom she was more intimately connected by the daily incidents of life. This sentiment was based upon a sort of divination of her sufferings, the cause of which would naturally

pre-occupy a young girl. No human power could prevent a word now and then escaping Martha or Josette, and revealing to Margaret the origin of the situation in which the house had been for the last two years. Spite of the discretion of Madame Claes, her daughter gradually unraveled, thread by thread, the mysterious web of their domestic drama. In a given time, Margaret would be her mother's confidante, and, in the end, the most formidable of judges.

Madame Claes, therefore, applied herself almost exclusively to influencing Margaret, and sought to make her share her own devotion for Balthazar. The firmness, the wisdom that she found in her daughter, made her shudder at the idea of a possible struggle between Balthazar and Margaret, when, after her own death, she should be succeeded by her in the management of the household. The poor woman had, therefore, cause to dread the consequences of her death more than her death itself. Her solicitude for Balthazar was manifested in the resolution she had just taken. By releasing her husband's property, she assured his independence, and anticipated all disputes by separating his interests from those of his children. She hoped to see him happy till the time when she should close her eyes; she trusted, besides, to bequeath the delicacy of her own heart to Margaret, who would continue to play the part of an angel of love, by exerting a tutelary and conservative authority over her family. She thus expected

that her affection would still shine from the depths of the tomb upon those who were dear to her. Nevertheless, she did not wish to lower the father in the eyes of the daughter by initiating her before the time, into the terrors with which Balthazar's scientific passion inspired her. She studied Margaret's soul and character, to learn whether she would become of herself a mother for her brothers and sister, an affectionate and tender wife for her father. The last days of Madame Claes were thus embittered by calculations and apprehensions which she did not dare to trust to any one. Feeling herself stricken in the very seat of life by this last scene, she fixed her gaze upon the future; while Balthazar, henceforth incapable of attending either to economy, his moneyed interests or his domestic duties, abandoned his mind to the Absolute. The profound silence which reigned in the parlor was disturbed only by the monotonous motions of Claes' foot, which he went on moving up and down without noticing that Jean had left it. Seated by her mother's side and gazing upon her pale and agonized countenance, Margaret turned from time to time towards her father, astonished at his insensibility. The shutting of the street gate now resounded through the house, and the family saw the abbé de Solis, leaning upon the arm of his nephew, slowly crossing the court yard.

"Ah, there's Monsieur Emmanuel," said Felicie.

"Kind young man," said Madame Claes, on per-

ceiving Emmanuel de Solis, "I am glad to see him again."

Margaret blushed at hearing the eulogy which thus escaped her mother. Two days ago, the sight of this young man had awakened feelings in her heart before unknown, and had called forth thoughts in her mind until then inert. During the first visit paid by the confessor to his penitent, several of those imperceptible events which fill a large space in life had taken place; their results were sufficiently important to require a sketch of the two new personages introduced into the bosom of the family.

Madame Claes had always acted upon the principle of performing her devotional exercises in private. Her spiritual adviser, almost unknown to the family, now visited the house for the second time; but there, as elsewhere, all felt a sort of emotion and admiration at the sight of the uncle and nephew. The abbé de Solis, an octogenarian with silvery hair, had a decrepit face, the whole vitality of which seemed to have withdrawn to his eyes. He walked with difficulty, for one of his little legs terminated in a dreadfully deformed foot, which, wrapped in a sort of velvet bag, compelled him to use a crutch when not aided by his nephew's arm. His bowed frame, his withered body, offered the spectacle of a frail and suffering constitution sustained by a will of iron and a chastened religious spirit. This priest—a Spaniard, remarkable for his great intellect, his genuine piety, and his extended acquirements—had been suc-

cessively a Dominican, the high-penitentiary of Toledo, and vicar-general of the archbishopric of Malines. Had it not been for the French Revolution, the influence of the Casa-Reals would have raised him to the highest dignities of the Church; but the sorrow he felt at the death of the young duke, his pupil, disgusted him with active life, and he gave himself entirely up to the education of his nephew, who was left an orphan at an early age. At the time of the conquest of Belgium, he had established himself in Madame Claes' neighborhood. From his youth up, the abbé de Solis had professed an enthusiastic devotion for Saint Theresa, which led him, as did the tendency of his mind, towards the mystic side of Christianity. When he found in Flanders—where Mademoiselle Bourignon, as well as the Illuminee and Quietist writers, made the most proselytes—a flock of Catholics imbued with these opinions, he remained there, and all the more willingly from the fact that he was regarded as a patriarch by that peculiar communion who continued to observe the doctrines of the Mystics, in spite of the censures which fell upon Fénelon and Madame Guyon. His morals were rigid, his life was exemplary, and he was believed to have ecstacies. Notwithstanding the alienation from the things of this world that a priest so severe should profess, the affection he bore his nephew made him attentive to his interests. When a matter of charity was under discussion, the old man laid the faithful of his

church under contribution before having recourse to his own fortune, and his patriarchal authority was so well established, his intentions were so pure, his perspicacity was so rarely deceived, that every one complied with his demands. To get an idea of the contrast between the uncle and nephew, the reader may compare the old man to one of those hollow willows which vegetate at the water's edge, and the young man to the sweet briar laden with roses, whose elegant and upright stem shoots forth from the bosom of the moss-covered tree, which it seems anxious to help to stand erect again.

Emmanuel, who had been strictly brought up by his uncle, and was constantly by his side, like the maiden entrusted to the experienced matron, was full of that tingling sensibility, that half-dreaming ingenuousness, which are the transitory flowers of youth—hardy only in the soul well penetrated with religious principle. The old priest had repressed the expression of voluptuous sentiment in his pupil, by preparing him for the trials of life by continuous labor, and an almost cloistral discipline. This education, which would give Emmanuel to the world in all his innocence, and ensure his happiness if he wisely bestowed his first affections, had endowered him with an angelic purity, and given his person all that charm which belongs to women when young. His timid eyes—which spoke, however, of a strong and courageous soul—emitted a light that vibrated upon the heart as the sound of glass diffuses its

undulations on the ear. His expressive though regular face, was remarkable for a great precision of contour, a happy purity of lines, and for the profound tranquillity which flows from a heart at peace. Everything in it was harmonious. His black hair, his brown eyes and eyebrows, threw into strong relief his fair complexion and lively color. His voice was what would be expected from such a face. His feminine movements harmonized with the melody of his voice, with the tender purity of his glance. He seemed ignorant of the attraction exerted by the half-melancholy reserve of his attitude, the modesty of his language, and the respectful attentions he paid his uncle.

On seeing him study the tortuous walk of the old abbé, and lend himself to his painful deviations that he might not counteract them, look out in advance for anything which might hurt his feet, and show him the best path, it was impossible not to recognize in Emmanuel those generous sentiments which make man sublime. He appeared so great in loving his uncle without judging him, in obeying him without ever disputing his orders, that every one was willing to see an example of predestination in the harmonious name given him by his god-mother. When the old man exercised his priestly despotism, either at home or in company, Emmanuel sometimes raised his head so proudly, as if to show what his power would be were he contending with any other man, that persons of spirit were strongly moved, like artists at the

sight of a superb production—for lofty sentiments speak quite as loudly to the soul by living conceptions as by art realizations.

Emmanuel had accompanied his uncle in his first visit to Madame Claes, to examine the family pictures. Margaret, learning from Martha that the abbé de Solis was in the gallery, and desiring to see that celebrated man, had sought a pretext to rejoin her mother, in order to gratify her curiosity. She went in somewhat abruptly, affecting the levity beneath which young women so adroitly conceal their purposes, and, by the side of the bowed, cadaverous old man, dressed in black, saw the fresh and delicious face of Emmanuel. The looks of the two, equally youthful and ingenuous, expressed the same astonishment. Emmanuel and Margaret had doubtless already seen each other in their dreams. Both lowered their eyes, and then raised them together, making a simultaneous confession. Margaret took her mother's arm, spoke to her in a whisper, to give herself courage, and sheltered herself, so to speak, under the maternal wing, at the same time bending her neck, with all the grace of a swan, to look at Emmanuel, who still remained clinging to his uncle's arm. Though the light of the gallery was skilfully diffused to bring out the merits of each picture, it was feeble enough to facilitate their furtive glances —the joy of timid lovers. Neither of them, doubtless, even in thought, went so far as the IF by which the passions begin; but both felt that profound agi-

tation which stirs the heart, and the secret of which the young keep to themselves, either for the luxury of the thing, or from modesty.

The first impression which determines the overflow of a long restrained sensibility, is followed, in all young people, by the almost stupid amazement that the first sound of music causes in children. Some laugh and think, others do not laugh until they have thought; but all who are destined to live on poesy or love, listen deeply, and then ask for the melody again, by a glance already lit up with pleasure, already rife with a thirst for the infinite. If we love, irresistibly, the spot where, in childhood, we were initiated into the beauties of harmony, if we remember the musician, and even the instrument with delight, how can we help loving the being who was the first to acquaint us with the music of life! Is not the first heart which taught us to breathe the breath of love something like a fatherland? Emmanuel and Margaret were, the one to the other, that Musical Voice which awakens a dormant sense, the hand which draws aside the veil of clouds, and shows them the skies bathed by the fires of the south. When Madame Claes stopped the old man before a painting by Guido representing an angel, Margaret stretched her head forward to see what impression it would have upon Emmanuel, and the young man looked at Margaret to compare the mute expression of the canvas to the living expression of the creature. This involuntary and delicious flat-

tery was understood and appreciated. The old abbé praised the beautiful composition highly, and Madame Claes answered him, but the two young people remained silent.

Such was their meeting. The mysterious light of the gallery, the quiet of the house, the presence of their near relatives, everything conspired to engrave the delicate features of this dreamy mirage more deeply upon their hearts. The thousand confused thoughts which had assailed Margaret became calmer, and made her soul one limpid surface, tinting it with luminous rays, when Emmanuel stammered forth a few faltering phrases, on taking leave of Madame Claes. His voice, whose fresh and velvet-like sound filled her heart with an enchantment unknown before, finished the sudden revolution Emmanuel had caused—one that he was to fructify to his own behoof; for the man employed by destiny to awaken love in a young girl's heart is often unconscious of what he has done, and so leaves his work incomplete. Margaret bowed in confusion, and said farewell by a look which seemed to express her regret at losing so pure and charming a vision. Like the child, she wanted the music over again. This adieu was exchanged at the foot of the old staircase, before the parlor door; when she returned to the parlor, she looked at the uncle and nephew till the street gate closed upon them. Madame Claes had been too much occupied by the serious subjects

discussed in her interview with her confessor, to observe her daughter's physiognomy.

When Monsieur de Solis and his nephew now appeared for the second time, she was still too violently agitated to notice the flush which overspread Margaret's face and revealed the fermentation of the first pleasure received in her virgin heart. When the abbé was announced, Margaret hastily took up her work, and seemed so very devoted to it that she bowed to the uncle and nephew without looking at them. Monsieur Claes returned the abbé's salutation mechanically, and left the room like a man carried away by his meditations. The pious Dominican sat down by Josephine, sounding her by one of those looks by which he penetrated the soul; for the sight of Claes and his wife was enough to enable him to divine a catastrophe.

"Young people," said the mother, "go and walk in the garden. Margaret, show Emmanuel your father's tulips."

Margaret, half abashed, took Felicie's arm, and looked at the young man, who went out of the parlor seizing Jean by way of support. When they were all four in the garden, Felicie and Jean went their own way, leaving Margaret almost alone with young de Solis; she led him to the clump of tulips, invariably arranged in the same fashion every year by Lemulquinier.

"Do you like tulips?" asked Margaret, after

HE LOOKED AT MARGARET.—*See Page* 145.

remaining a minute in profound silence, which Emmanuel did not seem inclined to break.

"Mademoiselle, they are beautiful flowers; but to love them one must have a taste for them, and know how to appreciate their beauties. These flowers dazzle me. My habit of studying in the little dark chamber where I live, close to my uncle, leads me, no doubt, to prefer what is softer to the sight."

While saying these words, he looked at Margaret, but the look, full of confused desires as it was, conveyed no allusion to the smooth whiteness, the calmness, or the pale colors, which made her face a flower.

"Do you study much, then?" replied Margaret, leading Emmanuel to a bench with a green back. "From here you will not see the tulips so close; they will fatigue your eyes less. You are right—the colors dance in the view and injure the sight."

"What do I study?" returned the young man, after a moment's silence, during which he smoothed the sand of the path with his foot. "I study all sorts of things. My uncle wanted to make me a priest."

"Oh!" said Margaret, innocently.

"I resisted; I felt it was not my vocation; but it required great courage to oppose the wishes of my uncle: he is so good, and he loves me so much. He lately bought a substitute for me, to save me from the conscription, poor orphan that I am!"

"What do you intend to be yourself, then?" asked Margaret, who appeared to wish afterwards to recall her words, and allowed a gesture to escape her, adding: "Excuse me, sir, you must think me very curious."

"Oh, mademoiselle," said Emmanuel, looking at her with as much admiration as tenderness, "nobody except my uncle has ever put me that question before. I am studying to be a professor. What else can I do? I am not rich. If I can become the principal of a college in Flanders, I shall have the means of living modestly, and shall marry some simple girl, whom I will tenderly love. Such is the life I have in view. Perhaps that is why I prefer a daisy upon which everybody treads, in the plain of Orchies, to these beautiful tulips, shining with gold, purple, sapphires, and emeralds, representing a life of pomp, whilst the daisy represents a calm, patriarchal life—the life of a poor professor, such as I shall be."

"I have always been accustomed to call the flower you name daisies, marguerites," she said.

Emmanuel de Solis blushed excessively, and sought a reply, whilst tracing figures in the sand with his feet. Embarrassed which to choose of all the ideas that rose to his mind, and that appeared foolish; then, confused by his delay in answering, he said: "I did not dare to pronounce your name ——" He could not finish.

"Professor!" she resumed.

"Oh, mademoiselle, I wish to be a professor to gain a living; but I shall undertake works which may render me more widely useful. I have a great taste for historical researches."

"Indeed!"

That "indeed!" full of secret desires, abashed the young man still more, and he began to laugh rather awkwardly, saying: "You make me talk of myself, mademoiselle, when I ought to talk only of you."

"My mother and your uncle have finished their conversation, I believe," she replied, looking into the parlor windows.

"I find your mother much changed, mademoiselle."

"She suffers much, without telling us the cause of her sufferings, and we can only sympathize with her sorrows."

Madame Claes, in fact, had just closed a delicate consultation, the subject of which was a case of conscience, that the abbé alone could decide. Foreseeing complete ruin, she wished to retain, unknown to Balthazar, who cared little about his affairs, a considerable sum out of the proceeds of the pictures M. de Solis had sold in Holland, and to conceal and reserve it for the time when the family should be reduced to want.

After mature deliberation, and after having weighed the circumstances in which Madame Claes was placed, the old Dominican had approved such an act of prudence. He left her to attend to the

sale, which was to be a secret transaction, so as not to lower the consideration in which the Claeses were held. The old man sent his nephew with a letter to Amsterdam, where Emmanuel, delighted at being able to render a service to the Claes family, succeeded in selling the pictures of the gallery to the celebrated bankers Happe and Duncker, for an ostensible sum of eighty-five thousand Dutch ducats, and the additional sum of fifteen thousand more which were to be secretly paid to Madame Claes. The pictures were so well known, that the reply of Balthazar to a letter Messrs. Happe and Duncker addressed him, sufficed to close the bargain. Emmanuel de Solis was authorized by Claes to receive the price of the pictures; they were forwarded to him privately, that the city of Douay might know nothing of the sale.

Towards the end of September, Balthazar repaid the money that had been lent him, released his property, and resumed his labors; but the house of Claes was despoiled of its noblest ornament. Blinded by his passion, he exhibited not the least regret, he believed himself so certain of being able to repair the loss quickly, that he had stipulated in the contract that he might redeem the pictures. A hundred painted bits of canvas were nothing in the eyes of Josephine, in comparison with domestic happiness and the gratification of her husband; besides, she filled the gallery with the pictures which ornamented the reception-rooms, and to conceal the void they left in the front house, she changed its furniture.

His debts being paid, Balthazar had about two hundred thousand francs left, with which to recommence his experiments. The abbé and his nephew were the depositaries of the fifteen thousand ducats reserved for Madame Claes. To increase this sum, the abbé sold the ducats, to which the events of the continental war had given a higher value. One hundred and sixty-six thousand francs, in silver, were buried in the cellar of the house inhabited by the abbé de Solis. Madame Claes had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing her husband closely absorbed for eight months. Nevertheless, too severely affected by the blow thus dealt her, she sank into a state of languor which would necessarily grow worse. Science so completely consumed Balthazar, that neither the reverses of France, nor the first fall of Napoleon, nor the return of the Bourbons, could divert his attention from his occupations; he was neither a husband, father, nor citizen—he was a chemist.

Towards the end of the year 1814, Madame Claes had declined so rapidly that she no longer left her bed. Unwilling to vegetate in her chamber, where she had lived so happily, where the remembrances of her departed joys would have suggested involuntary comparisons with the present which would crush her at once, she remained in the parlor. The physicians had favored this aspiration of her heart by pronouncing the room more airy, more cheerful, and more suitable to her situation than her chamber.

The bed in which this unfortunate woman closed her life, was placed between the chimney-piece and the window looking into the garden. There she passed her last days, piously occupied in perfecting the minds of her two daughters, upon whom she delighted to direct the glowing radiations of her own. Weakened in its manifestations, conjugal love now permitted maternal love to display itself. The mother thus became the more charming from having delayed to be so. Like all generous persons, she experienced sublime feelings of delicacy, which she took for remorse. Believing that she had withheld from her children a tenderness that was due to them, she sought to redeem these imaginary wrongs by fond attention and solicitude which rendered her dearer to them than ever. She wished, in some sort, to have them live against her heart, to cover them with her drooping wings, and to love them enough in one day to atone for all those in which she fancied she had neglected them. Her sufferings gave to her endearments and to her words an unctuous warmth which seemed exhaled from her very soul. Her eyes caressed her children before her voice affected them by its benignant intonations, and her hand appeared to be always shedding benedictions upon them.

Though, after having regained its habits of comfort, the house of Claes no longer received visitors; though its isolation became more complete; though Balthazar gave no fete on the anniversary of his

marriage, the city of Douay was not at all surprised. In the first place, the ill health of Madame Claes appeared a sufficient reason for the change; then the payment of his debts stopped the flow of scandal; and lastly, the political vicissitudes to which Flanders was subjected, the war of the Hundred Days, and a foreign occupation, caused the chemist to be completely forgotten. During these two years, the city was so often upon the point of being taken, so consecutively occupied either by the French or their enemies; there came thither so many foreigners, so many country people sought refuge there, so many interests were involved, so many lives were at stake, so many changes and misfortunes occurred, that every one had enough to do to think of himself. The abbé de Solis and his nephew, and the two brothers Pierquin, were the only persons who visited Madame Claes.

The winter of 1814–15 was to her a long and painful agony. Her husband very rarely came to see her; he occasionally remained with her a few hours after dinner; but as she no longer had strength to sustain a long conversation, he would give utterance to one or two sentences, eternally the same, seat himself down, and hold his tongue, leaving a dismal silence to brood over the parlor.

This monotony was broken on the days when the abbé de Solis and his nephew spent the evening at the house. Whilst the old abbé played at backgammon with Balthazar, Margaret chatted with

Emmanuel near the bed of her mother, who smiled at their innocent joy without showing how sweet and yet painful was the fresh breeze of this virginal love to her bruised spirit. The inflection of voice which charmed these two young creatures went to her very heart, and the surprised glance of intelligence that passed between them, reminded her, half dead as she was, of those young and happy hours which gave to the present all its bitterness. Emmanuel and Margaret had tact and delicacy enough to lead them to repress the delicious childishness of love, that they might not offend the sorrowing woman, the cause of whose griefs they instinctively guessed.

No one has hitherto remarked that the sentiments have a life which is all their own, a nature which proceeds from the circumstances in the midst of which they are produced; they preserve both the physiognomy of the places where they grow up, and the impression of the ideas which influenced their development. There are passions ardently conceived which remain ardent like that of Madame Claes for her husband; there are sentiments upon which everything smiles, and which retain their morning freshness; their harvests of joy are garnered with laughter and festivity. But there are also loves to be met with fatally beset with melancholy, or girded about by misfortune, whose pleasures are painful, costly, loaded with fears, poisoned by remorse, or full of despondency. The love that

lay buried in the hearts of Emmanuel and Margaret without either of them yet knowing that love was concerned in the matter; the sentiment born beneath the dark arch of the Claes gallery, before an old, severe abbé, in a moment of calm and silence; that love, grave and discreet, but abounding in secret delights, heightened in enjoyment like grapes stolen from a vineyard corner—bore the brown colors, the gray tints, which characterized its early hours. Not daring to give themselves up to any lively demonstration before this bed of grief and sickness, the two young people unconsciously increased their pleasures by a concentration which pressed them down to the very bottom of their hearts.

What attentions were lavished upon the sick woman, and how Emmanuel delighted to share them, happy in being able to join with Margaret, by constituting himself, beforehand, the son of her mother! Melancholy thanks upon the lips of the young girl took the place of the honeyed language of lovers. The sighs from their hearts, enraptured at some secretly exchanged look, were distinguished but little from the sighs drawn from them by the sight of maternal suffering. Their happy little moments of indirect avowals, of half-finished promises, of suppressed aspirations, might be compared to the allegories painted by Raphael upon dark backgrounds. They both had a certainty which they did not confess, even to themselves; they knew the sun was above them, but they did not know

what wind would drive away the black clouds piled high above their heads; they doubted the future, and, apprehensive that sorrow would be their life-long portion, they remained timidly in the shades of their twilight, without daring to ask each other, "Shall we finish the day together?"

Nevertheless, the tenderness Madame Claes evinced for her children, nobly concealed all that she concealed from herself. Her children caused her neither agitation nor terror; they were her consolation, but they were not her life; she lived by them, but she died for Balthazar. However painful the presence of her husband was to her, as he sat abstracted for whole hours together, and casting towards her, from time to time, a monotonous glance, she never forgot her griefs except during those cruel moments. The indifference of Balthazar for his dying wife would have appeared criminal to any stranger who witnessed it; but Madame Claes and her daughters were accustomed to it; they knew the heart of the man, and absolved him. If, in the course of the day, Madame Claes underwent any dangerous crisis, if she found herself worse, if she seemed at the point of death, Claes was the only person in the house, and almost in the city, who was ignorant of it. Lemulquinier, his valet, knew it; but neither his daughters, upon whom their mother imposed silence, nor his wife, informed him of the peril of the creature whom he formerly so ardently loved.

When his step was heard in the gallery, as he was coming down to dinner, Madame Claes was happy, she was about to see him, and she collected all her strength to enjoy that pleasure. As he entered, the pale, half-dying woman's face was suffused with color, and wore an appearance of health; the chemist came to her bedside, took her hand, and saw her under too flattering auspices; to him alone she was well. When he said to her, "My dear wife, how do you find yourself to-day?" she would reply, "Better, my dear husband!" leading the absent-minded man to believe that on the morrow she would be up and about again.

Balthazar's pre-occupation was so great, that he supposed the disease of which his wife was dying was a simple indisposition; dying, in the eyes of everybody else, she was living in his. A complete separation of the married couple was the result of this year. Claes slept at a distance from his wife, rose early in the morning, and shut himself up in his laboratory or his closet; seeing her only in the presence of his daughters, or the two or three friends who called to visit her, he soon learned to do without her. The two beings whose very thoughts were formerly in unison, now had few, very few, of those moments of communion, of confidence, of outpouring, which constitute a life of the affections, and then a time arrived when these rare enjoyments ceased altogether. Physical suffering came to the poor woman's aid, and helped her to endure a void,

a separation, which would have killed her had she been living. She experienced such acute pains, that, sometimes, she was glad that he whom she still loved was not a witness of them. She contemplated Balthazar during a part of the evening, and knowing him to be happy in his own way, she espoused the happiness she had procured him. This poor enjoyment satisfied her, she no longer asked herself if she were beloved, she forced herself to think so, and glided along upon that sheet of ice without daring to bear hard upon it, lest she might break it and drown her heart in the frightful chaos beneath.

As no event disturbed this calm, and as the disease which was slowly consuming Madame Claes contributed to this internal peace, by maintaining her conjugal affection in a passive state, she reached without difficulty the early part of the year 1816 in this melancholy manner.

Towards the end of February, Pierquin, the notary, dealt the blow which hurried this angelic woman, whose soul, the abbé de Solis said, was almost without sin, to her grave.

"Madame," he whispered in her ear, at a moment when her daughters could not hear their conversation, "M. Claes has desired me to borrow three hundred thousand francs upon his property—take all the measures you can to assure your children's fortune."

Madame Claes clasped her hands, raised her eyes towards heaven, and thanked the notary by a gentle inclination of the head, and by a smile so sad, that

even he was moved by it. This sentence was a blow from a poinard, and it killed Pepita. During the day she abandoned herself to reflections which swelled her heart to bursting; she felt in one of those conditions in which the traveler, having lost his balance, is thrown by a mere pebble to the bottom of the precipice whose edge he has long and courageously trodden.

When the notary was gone, Madame Claes desired Margaret to bring her writing materials, collected her thoughts, summoned all her strength, and remained some minutes drawing up a memorandum relative to her will. She stopped several times to gaze at her daughter. The time for confidence had come. In managing the house during her mother's illness, Margaret had realized the hopes of her dying parent so well, that the latter viewed the future of her family with trust, at seeing herself revived in this loving and self-reliant angel. There could be no doubt that these two women foresaw they had mutual and sad confessions to make; the daughter looked at her mother as soon as the mother looked at her, and tears sprang to the eyes of both.

Several times Margaret when Madame Claes was resting, said, "Mother!" as if to speak, and then stopped, as if suffocated, though her mother, who was too much engaged by her last thoughts, did not ask her the cause of the interrogation. At length, Madame Claes wanted to seal her letter; Margaret,

who held a candle, discreetly drew back, to avoid seeing the address.

"You may read it, my child!" said her mother in an agonized tone.

Margaret saw her mother trace these words, "*To my daughter Margaret.*"

"We will talk when I have rested a little," she added, as she put the letter under her pillow.

She then sank back as if exhausted by the effort, and slept for several hours. When she awoke, her two sons and her two daughters were kneeling by the side of her bed, and were praying with fervor. It was Thursday; Gabriel and Jean had just arrived from school with Emmanuel de Solis, who had been appointed professor of history and philosophy six months before.

"My dear children! we must bid each other farewell!" she cried, "you have not abandoned me! but he who——" She could not finish.

"M. Emmanuel," said Margaret, seeing her mother turn pale; "go and tell my father mamma is worse."

The young man went up to the laboratory, and after having, through Lemulquinier, obtained a hearing from Balthazar, the latter replied to his pressing entreaty, "I am coming."

"My young friend," said Madame Claes to Emmanuel when he had come back, "take my two sons with you, and go and fetch your uncle. I believe it is necessary that the last sacraments should

be given me; I wish to receive them from his hands."

When she was alone with her daughters, she made a sign to Margaret, who, understanding her mother, sent Félicie away.

"I wanted to speak to you, too, mamma," said Margaret, who not believing her mother so ill as she was, made a blunder still worse than that of Pierquin; "for the last ten days I have had no money for home expenses, and I owe the servants six months wages. I was twice on the point of asking my father for money, but I did not dare. Did you know that the pictures in the gallery and the cellar have all been sold?"

"He never told me a word of that!" cried Madame Claes. "Oh God! my God! you recall me to yourself in time! My poor children, what will become of you?"

She put up a fervent prayer, which colored her eyes with the fires of repentance. "Margaret," she said, taking the letter from under the pillow; "here is a document you must not open or read till the moment when, after my death, you are in the greatest distress, that is to say, when there is no bread in the house. My beloved Margaret, love your father dearly, but take care of your sister and brothers. In a few days, in a few hours, perhaps, you will be at the head of the household. Be economical. If you find yourself opposed to your father's will—and the case may happen, for he has spent large sums in

searching for a secret, the discovery of which would crown him with immense glory and wealth; he will, doubtless, want money, perhaps he will ask you for some—then show all a daughter's tenderness, and learn to reconcile the interests of which you will be the protectress, with what you owe your father, a great man who sacrifices his happiness to the honor of his family. He cannot do wrong but in appearance; his intentions will always be noble; he is so excellent, his heart is full of love, you will see him kind and affectionate again! I have thought it my duty to speak thus to you on the verge of the grave, Margaret. If you wish to soften the pangs of death, you will promise me, my child, to replace me with your father, never to cause him sorrow; never reproach him with anything, do not venture to judge him! In short, be a gentle and affectionate mediatress, until, your work terminated, he shall again become the head of his family."

"I understand you, my beloved mother," said Margaret, kissing the inflamed eyes of her dying parent, "and I will act as you desire."

"Do not marry, my angel," resumed Madame Claes, "till Gabriel is able to succeed you in managing the affairs of the house. Your husband, if you were to marry, might not perhaps share your feelings, would bring trouble into the family, and torment your father."

Margaret looked at her mother, and said, "Have

you no other advice to give me respecting my marriage?"

"Would you hesitate, my dear child?" said the dying woman, in terror.

"No," she replied, "I promise to obey you."

"Poor child, I was not able to sacrifice myself for you," added the mother, shedding scalding tears, "and I now require you to sacrifice yourself for all. Happiness makes us selfish. Yes, Margaret, I have been weak because I was happy. Be strong, preserve your reason for those who have none here. Act so that your brothers and sister may never accuse me. Love your father dearly, and do not thwart him—too much."

She laid her head upon her pillow, and added not another word; her strength had failed her. The internal combat between the wife and the mother had been too violent. Some minutes after, the clergyman came, preceded by the abbé de Solis, and the parlor was filled with the people of the house. When the ceremony began, Madame Claes, who had been lifted up by her confessor, looked at all the persons who surrounded her, and not seeing Balthazar, said:

"Where is my husband?"

This inquiry, in which were summed up both her life and her death, was pronounced in so piteous a tone that a cold shudder ran through the assembly. Spite of her great age, Martha darted from the room like an arrow, ran up the stairs, and knocking loudly

at the laboratory door exclaimed, in violent indignation:

"Sir, madame is dying, and they are waiting for you to give her extreme unction!"

"I am coming down," replied Balthazar.

Lemulquinier came the moment after, saying his master was following him.

Madame Claes never ceased to look at the parlor door, but her husband did not make his appearance till the ceremony was concluded. The abbé de Solis and the children surrounded the dying woman's pillow. On seeing her husband enter, a faint color mounted to the cheeks of Josephine, and a few tears coursed down them.

"*You were doubtless on the point of decomposing azote*," she said, with an angelic sweetness that made all present shudder.

"That is done!" he cried, joyously. "Azote contains oxygen and another substance of an imponderable nature, which is apparently the principle of the—

Murmurs of horror interrupted him, and recalled his presence of mind.

"What did they tell me?" he said. "Are you worse? What has happened?"

"This has happened, sir," whispered the abbé de Solis in his ear; "your wife is dying, and you have killed her!"

Without waiting for a reply the abbé de Solis took Emmanuel's arm and retired, attended by the

children, to the outer court. Balthazar stood for a moment as if thunderstruck, looking at his wife, and shedding tears.

"You are dying, and I have killed you!" he cried. "What does he mean by that?"

"My dear," she replied, "I have only lived by your love, and you have, unknown to yourself, withdrawn my life from me."

"Leave us," said Claes to the children, who at that moment returned. "Have I for a single instant ceased to love you?" he resumed, seating himself by the bedside, and taking her hands and kissing them.

"My love, I utter no reproach. You rendered me happy, too happy; I have not been able to support the comparison of the early days of our marriage, which were full, with the latter days, in which you have not been yourself, and which have been void! The life of the heart, like physical life, has its stated action. For six years you have been dead to love, to your family, to everything which made us happy. I do not speak of the felicities which are the sustenance of youth, they naturally cease in the latter season of life; but they leave fruits which nourish the soul, unbounded confidence, and gentle habits. Well, you have torn from me these treasures of our age of life; I depart in good time; we no longer lived together in any way; you concealed both your thoughts and actions from me.

"How could you come to fear me? Have I ever given you a word, a look, a gesture, of blame? And

yet you have sold your last picture, you have sold even the wine in your cellar, and you are borrowing again upon your property, without having said a word to me. Oh! I shall leave life disgusted with life. If you commit errors, if you blind yourself in the pursuit of the impossible, have I not shown you that there is love enough in me to find pleasure in sharing your errors, and in walking side by side with you, even if you led me into the paths of crime? You have loved me too well; that is my glory and my grief. My illness has lasted a long time, Balthazar; it began the day when, in this place where I am about to expire, you convinced me that you were more wrapped up in science than in your family. Behold your wife dead, and your own fortune consumed! Your fortune and your wife belonged to you, you were at liberty to dispose of them; but the day when I shall be no more, my fortune belongs to my children, and you have no right to touch it. What is to become of you? Now it is my duty to tell you the truth; the dying see into the future. Where, henceforward, will be the counterpoise to balance the accursed passion of which you have made your life? If you have sacrificed me to it, your children will be as nothing before you; for I will do you the justice to confess that you have preferred me to everything. Two millions and six years of labor have been hurled into this gulf for nothing!"

At these words Claes dropped his blanched head in his hands, and concealed his face.

"You never will find anything in your researches but shame for yourself and want for your children," continued the dying woman. "You are already derided as Claes the alchemist; it will soon be Claes the madman! For my own part, I have faith in you. I believe you to be great, learned, full of genius; but with the vulgar, genius closely resembles madness. Glory is the sun of the dead; while you live, you will be unfortunate, as all the great are, and you will ruin your children. I depart without having enjoyed your renown, which might have consoled me for the loss of happiness. Well, my dear Balthazar, to take the sting from death, I must be certain that our children will not want bread; but nothing, not even you, can calm my anxiety—"

"I swear," said Claes, "to—"

"Swear not, my dear husband, that you may not break your oath!" she returned, interrupting him. "You owed us your protection, and we have been without it nearly seven years. Science is your life. A great man can have neither wife nor children. Go alone in your paths of want and misery! Your virtues are not those of the vulgar; you belong to the world, you cannot belong to either a wife or a family. You dry up the earth around you, like wide-spreading trees! For me, poor plant! I was not abie to raise myself high enough, I expire when but half your term of life is run. I waited for to-day to tell you these horrible thoughts which I discovered only by the flashes of grief and despair.

Spare my children! May that word forever echo in your heart! I will repeat it with my last sigh. Your wife is dead! You have bereaved her slowly and gradually of her feelings and her pleasures. Alas! without the care thus involuntarily taken, should I have lived so long? But these poor children did not abandon me! they grew up amid my sorrows, the mother survived. Spare, spare our children!"

"Lemulquinier!" cried Balthazar, in a voice of thunder. The old valet quickly made his appearance. "Go up yonder and destroy everything, machines, preparations, everything—do it with precaution, but break everything. I renounce science forever," he said to his wife.

"It is too late!" she murmured, looking at Lemulquinier. "Margaret!" she cried, feeling that she was dying. Margaret appeared upon the threshold, and uttered a piercing cry on beholding her mother's glassy eyes. "Margaret!" repeated the dying woman.

This last exclamation contained such a strong appeal to her daughter, she invested it with so much authority, that the cry was her whole will and testament. The family, terrified at hearing it, hurried into the room, and beheld Madame Claes expiring; she had exhausted the last powers of her life in her conversation with her husband. Margaret and Balthazar, she at her pillow, he at the foot of the bed, stood motionless; they could not realize the death

of the woman whose virtues and inexhaustible tenderness were known but to themselves. The father and daughter exchanged a glance weighty with thoughts; the daughter condemned the father, the father already trembled at finding an instrument of vengeance in his daughter.

Although the remembrances of the love with which his wife had filled his life returned in crowds to besiege his memory, and gave the last words of the dead a holy authority, which would always make him listen to its voice, Balthazar felt that his heart was too weak against his genius; and then he heard a terrible muttering of passion, which denied the truth of his repentance, and made him afraid of himself. When his wife had departed, every one felt that the House of Claes had had a soul, and that that soul was no more. Such and so lively was the grief of the family, that the parlor in which the noble Josephine seemed yet to survive, remained closed; no one had the courage to enter it.

Society practices none of the virtues it demands of men; it commits crimes every hour, but it commits them in words; it stimulates to bad actions by pleasantry, as it degrades the beautiful by ridicule; it laughs at sons who lament their fathers too long, it anathematizes those who do not weep for them long enough; and then it amuses itself by appraising the dead before they are cold. The evening when Madame Claes died, the friends of that lady threw a few flowers over her grave between two games of

whist, and rendered homage to her excellent qualities while picking out their hearts or spades. Then, after several of those lachrymose sentences which form the Ba, be, bi, bo, bu of collective grief, and which are pronounced in the same intonation, without a whit more or less feeling, in all the cities of France, and at any hour, each person began to guess at the amount of property she had left.

Pierquin was the first to observe to those who were talking of the event, that the death of the excellent lady was a good thing for herself, her husband made her so unhappy ; but that it was still better for the children, for she had never been able to refuse her fortune to her husband, whom she adored, whereas now Claes could no longer dispose of it. And then all set to work to estimate how much poor Madame Claes had left, to reckon her savings, if she had made any, and she probably had not ; to take an inventory of her jewels, to exhibit her wardrobe, to ransack her drawers, while her afflicted family were weeping and praying around the death-bed.

With the rapid glance of a sworn appraiser, Pierquin calculated that the chattels of Madame Claes, to use his own words, might still be retrieved, and would amount to about fifteen hundred thousand francs, represented either by the forest of Waignies, the woods of which had, in twelve years, acquired an enormous value—and he counted the timber-trees and the pollards of all ages—or by the property of Balthazar, who was still able to make good his

account with his children, even if the proceeds of the liquidation did not acquit him with respect to them. Mademoiselle Claes, then, still in his slang, was a girl of four hundred thousand francs. "But if she does not marry speedily," he added,—"a step which will emancipate her, and allow the forest of Waignies to be put up for sale, to liquidate the share of the minors, and employ it in such a manner that Claes cannot interfere with it,—he is a man to ruin his children."

Every one looked round through the province for the young man who could pretend to the hand of Mademoiselle Claes, but no one paid the notary the compliment to think him worthy of it. The notary himself saw reasons for rejecting every one of the matches proposed as quite beneath Margaret. The guests looked at each other with a smile, and took pleasure in prolonging their provincial spite. Pierquin already regarded the death of Madame Claes as favorable to his pretensions, and, in his own mind, he cut up the body as best suited his interests.

"The good lady," he said, as he returned home to go to bed, "was as proud as a peacock, and would never have given me her daughter. Why should I not manœuvre a little now to bring about our marriage? Claes, the father, is a man intoxicated with carbon, who cares no longer for his children; if I were to ask him for his daughter, after having convinced Margaret of the urgency for her marrying to save the fortunes of her brothers and sisters, he

would be glad to get rid of a child who might give him trouble."

He fell asleep ruminating over the matrimonial charms of the contract, meditating upon the advantages the affair would secure him, and the guarantees for his happiness which he found in the person of her whose husband he constituted himself. It was difficult to find in the province a young lady more delicately beautiful, or one better brought up than Margaret was. Her modesty and grace were comparable to those of the pretty flower which Emmanuel had not dared to name before her, for fear of disclosing the secret wishes of his heart. Her sentiments were exalted, her principles were religious, she was sure to be a faithful wife; she not only flattered that vanity which every man consults more or less in the choice of a wife, she still further gratified the notary's pride by the great consideration which the family, doubly noble, enjoyed in Flanders, and which her husband would share.

The next morning, Pierquin took a few notes for a thousand francs each from his money-drawer, and offered them in a friendly spirit to Balthazar, in order to spare him any pecuniary annoyances whilst he was plunged in grief; touched with which delicate attention, Balthazar would, doubtless, praise the notary's heart and person to his daughter. But no such thing ensued. M. Claes and his daughter looked upon the matter in a very simple light, and their sufferings were too exclusive to allow them to

bestow a thought upon Pierquin. In fact, Balthazar's despair was so deep, that persons disposed to blame his conduct pardoned him, less in the name of the science which might have excused him, than in favor of his regrets, though they did not repair the injury. The world contents itself with grimace and outward show, it pays itself with what it gives in payment, without ascertaining the alloy; true grief is a spectacle to society, a sort of enjoyment which disposes it to absolve everything and everybody, even a criminal; in its avidity for emotions it acquits, without discernment, both the one who makes it laugh, and him who makes it weep, without asking them for any account of the means employed.

Margaret had accomplished her nineteenth year when her father placed the government of the family in her hands. Her authority was piously acknowledged by her sister and her two brothers, to whom, during the last moments of her life, Madame Claes had recommended obedience to their elder sister. Mourning set off her fair, fresh complexion, as sorrow gave a strong relief to her gentle, patient character. From the very outset she was prodigal of proofs of that feminine courage, of that constant serenity which the angels must have who are charged to disseminate peace, by touching the hearts of sufferers with their green palm-leaves.

Though she accustomed herself by the premature understanding of her duties, to conceal her grief, it was none the less lively on that account; the calm-

ness of her exterior was not in harmony with the depth of her sensations, and she was destined to know at an early period those terrible explosions of feeling which the heart is not always able to repress; her father would always hold her trammeled between the generosity natural to the young, and the voice of an imperious necessity. The calculations in which she was entangled, the very day after the death of her mother, brought her in conflict with the struggles of life, at the moment when girls should only be acquainted with its pleasures. A frightful education of suffering, this, and one which the angels on earth have never been spared!

The love which is based upon money and vanity is the most obstinate of all passions. Pierquin was determined not to delay his attack upon the heiress. A few days after the family went into mourning, he sought an opportunity of speaking to Margaret, and commenced operations with a skill which might perhaps have worn upon her; but love had endowed her soul with a clairvoyance which prevented her from being deluded by appearances which were all the more favorable for sentimental deceit, from the circumstance that Pierquin displayed the kindness that really did belong to him—that of the notary who believes himself a lover because he is saving the loved one's goods. Strong in his doubtful relationship, in his constant habit of managing the affairs and sharing the secrets of this family, certain of the esteem and friendship of the father, his inter-

ests furthered by the carelessness of a savant who had no other plans for his daughter's establishment, and not supposing that Margaret could have any predilection, he left her to form an opinion of a suit which only pretended to passion in alliance with calculations the most odious to young minds, and which he was unable to conceal. It was he who showed himself short-sighted, it was she who resorted to dissimulation, precisely because he thought he was acting against a girl without defence, and was not acquainted with the privileges of weakness.

"My dear cousin," he said to Margaret, with whom he was walking in the garden, "you know my heart, and you know how much I am disposed to respect the painful feelings which affect you at this moment. I am too sensitive to be a notary; I only live by the affections, and I am obliged to be constantly occupied with the moneyed interests of others, when I could wish to give myself up to the sweet emotions which constitute a happy life; therefore it grieves me much to be compelled to speak to you of matters that jar with the state of your mind; but it must be done. I have thought a great deal about you within the last few days. I have just discovered that, by a singular fatality, the fortune of your sister and your brothers, even your own, are in danger. Do you wish to save your family from complete ruin?"

"What must I do?" she asked, half-frightened at the notary's words.

"Marry," replied Pierquin.

"I will not marry!" she cried.

"You will marry," rejoined the notary, "when you have reflected on the critical situation in which you are placed."

"How can my marriage save—"

"That is exactly what I wanted to bring you to, cousin," said he, interrupting her. "Marriage emancipates."

"Why should I be emancipated?" said Margaret.

"To put you in possession, my dear little cousin," said the notary with an air of triumph. "In that state of things, you take your share of your mother's property. To give it to you it must be liquidated, and to liquidate it the forest of the Waignies must be put up for sale. That granted, all the property left by your mother will be capitalized, and your father will be compelled, as guardian, so to invest the fortunes of your brothers and sister that Chemistry can never again touch them."

"Supposing the contrary, what would happen?" Margaret asked.

"Why, your father will administer your property; and if he sets to work again to try to make gold, he may perhaps sell the forest of Waignies, and leave you all as naked as the infant Saint John. The forest of Waignies is worth, at this moment, nearly fourteen hundred thousand francs. If your father

should cut it down to-morrow, your thirteen hundred acres of bare ground would not be worth three hundred thousand francs. Is it not better to avoid this almost certain danger by bringing about at once the necessity for dividing the wood by your emancipation? You will thus save all the crops of wood which your father might sell, to your prejudice. At this moment, while Chemistry is asleep, he will necessarily invest the proceeds of the liquidation in the public funds. The funds are at fifty-nine; so that the dear children will have an income of nearly five thousand francs for fifty thousand francs; and as capital belonging to minors cannot be disposed of, your brothers and sister will find their fortunes doubled at their majority. Whilst otherwise—good lord!—well! Besides, your father has impaired your mother's property, and we shall know what the deficiency is by the inventory. If he is in arrears, you will take a mortgage on his property, and may yet save something."

"For shame!" said Margaret, "that would be insulting my father. My mother's last words were not pronounced so long ago that I cannot remember them. My father is incapable of plundering his children," she said, while tears of grief burst from her eyes. "You do not know him, M. Pierquin."

"But if your father, my dear cousin, goes to work at chemistry again, he—"

"We should be ruined, should we not?"

"Oh, yes, completely ruined! Believe me, Mar-

garet," he said, taking her hand, and pressing it to his heart, "I should be wanting in my duty if I did not insist. Your interest alone—"

"Sir," said Margaret, coldly, withdrawing her hand, "the real interest of my family requires me not to marry. My mother thought so."

"Cousin! cousin!" he cried, with the earnestness of a money-worshiper who sees himself losing a fortune, "you are committing suicide! you are casting your inheritance from your mother upon the waters! No matter! I will have zeal enough to match the exalted friendship I bear you. You do not know how much I love you; I have adored you since the last ball your father gave. You were perfectly delicious! You may trust to the voice of the heart, when it speaks of worldly interest, my dear Margaret."

A pause ensued.

"Yes, we will call a family council, and we will emancipate you without consulting you."

"But what do you mean by being emancipated?"

"To possess and enjoy your rights."

"If I can be emancipated without marrying, why do you wish me to marry? And who, pray?"

Pierquin endeavored to look tenderly at his cousin, but this expression agreed so ill with the rigidity of his eyes, which were accustomed to speak of little but money, that Margaret fancied she could read calculation in his improvised affection.

"Why, you would marry the person most agree-

able to you—in the city," he replied. "A husband is indispensable to you, even in a business point of view. You will be left alone with your father. When so left, will you be able to resist him?"

"Yes, sir, I shall know how to defend my brothers and my sister, when time and circumstances render it necessary."

"The deuce take the girl!" said Pierquin to himself; he then added, aloud: "No, no! you will not resist him!"

"We will say no more upon the subject, sir," she returned.

"Adieu, cousin; I will endeavor to serve you, in spite of yourself, and will prove how much I love you, by protecting you, without your consent, against a misfortune which every one in the city foresees."

"I thank you for the interest you bear me; but I implore you to propose nothing, to undertake nothing, that may cause my father the least annoyance."

Margaret remained pensive after Pierquin's departure. She contrasted his metallic voice, his manners, which exhibited a suppleness like that of a steel spring, and his looks, which announced servility rather than affection, with the melodiously mute poetry in which the sentiments of Emmanuel were clothed. Whatever we may do, whatever we may say, there is an admirable magnetism the effects of which can never deceive. The sound of the voice, the gaze, the passionate gestures, of the man truly in love may be

imitated; a young girl may be deceived by a skilful actor; but to succeed, must he not have the field to himself? If that young girl has near her a heart vibrating in unison with her own, will she not soon recognize the language of true love?

Emmanuel was at that moment, like Margaret, under the influence of the clouds which, since their first meeting, had formed a gloomy atmosphere over their heads, and deprived them of the sight of the clear blue heaven of love. He entertained for the chosen of his heart that species of idolatry which the absence of hope renders so sweet and so mysterious in its pious manifestations. Socially placed too far from Mademoiselle Claes by his want of fortune, and having nothing but a noble name to offer her, he saw no chance of being accepted as her husband. He had waited for some little encouragement, which Margaret had declined giving before the failing eyes of a dying mother.

Equally pure, they had never breathed a single word of love to each other. Their joys were the egotistical joys which the unhappy are forced to taste and enjoy by themselves. They had trembled separately, although agitated by a ray emanating from the same hope. They appeared to be afraid of themselves at already feeling they were so entirely each other's. Thus Emmanuel trembled at touching with his lips the hand of the sovereign for whom he had made a sanctuary in his heart. But though they had not allowed themselves any of the trifling,

yet immense, the innocent, yet serious, evidences which the most timid lovers indulge in, they were, nevertheless, so firmly lodged in each other's hearts, that both were ready to make the greatest sacrifices as the only pleasures they could enjoy.

Since the death of Madame Claes, their secret love had been stifled by the crape of mourning. From brown, the hues of the sphere in which they lived had become black, and the light was extinguished in tears. Margaret's reserve well-nigh became coldness, for she had to keep the vow exacted by her mother; and becoming freer than she had been, she became more rigid. Emmanuel had espoused the grief of his beloved, feeling that the least expression, the most simple requirement of love, would be an offence against the laws of the heart. This deep love, therefore, was more concealed than it had ever been. These two tender souls still emitted the same sound; but, separated by sorrow, as they had been by the timidity of youth and the respect due to the sufferings of the dying, they still confined themselves to the magnificent language of the eyes, to the mute eloquence of devotion, to an eternal cohesion—the sublime harmonies of youth, the first steps of love in its infancy.

Emmanuel came every morning to inquire after the health of Claes and Margaret; but he never went as far as the breakfast-room, unless he brought a letter from Gabriel, or unless Balthazar pressed him to walk in. His first glance at the young girl assured

her of a thousand sympathetic thoughts; he suffered from the silence which the proprieties imposed upon him—he had not quitted her—he shared her sorrows; in short, he shed the dew of his tears upon the heart of his beloved by a look unvitiated by any selfish thought. This kind young man lived so completely in the present, he clung so closely to the happiness he thought so fugitive, that Margaret sometimes reproached herself for not generously extending her hand to him and saying, "Let us be friends!"

Pierquin continued his importunities with that obstinacy which is the unreflecting patience of fools. He judged Margaret by the ordinary rules employed by the multitude in forming estimates of women. He believed that the words marriage, liberty, fortune, which he had dropped in her ear, would germinate in her mind, and there bloom into a desire of which he could take advantage; and he imagined that her coldness was dissimulation. But although he beset her with devotion and gallant attentions, he ill concealed the despotic manners of a man accustomed to decide the most important questions relative to family affairs. He consolingly repeated the commonplaces familiar to people of his profession, which glide like a snail over one's affliction, leaving a track of unfeeling words which disfigure its sanctity. His affection was so much wheedling. He left his feigned melancholy at the door, when he put on his overshoes and took his umbrella. He employed the

tone which his long familiarity with the family authorized him to assume, as an instrument to establish himself more firmly in the bosom of the family, and decide Margaret upon forming a marriage proclaimed beforehand throughout the city.

A true, devoted, respectful love, therefore, offered a striking contrast with an egotistical, calculating love. Everything was homogeneous in these two men. The one feigned a passion, and profited by the least advantages to bring about his marriage with Margaret; the other concealed his love, and trembled at the idea of manifesting the slightest symptom of his devotion. Some time after the death of her mother, and on the same day, Margaret had an opportunity of comparing the only two young men she was in a situation to judge. Hitherto, the solitude to which she had been condemned had not allowed her to see much company, and her situation denied access to persons likely to think of asking her in marriage. One day, after breakfast, on the first fine morning of the month of April, Emmanuel came in at the moment Claes was going out. Balthazar was so much affected by the forlorn appearance of the house, that he generally went and walked upon the ramparts during a considerable portion of the day. Emmanuel was about to follow Balthazar; he hesitated, appeared to summon up his resolution, looked at Margaret, and remained. Margaret perceived that the young professor wished to speak to her, and proposed to him to come into the garden.

She sent her sister to Martha, who was at work in the ante-chamber on the first story; she then seated herself upon a bench where she could be seen by her sister and the duenna.

"M. Claes is as much absorbed by his grief as he was by his scientific researches," said the young man, seeing Balthazar walking slowly along the court. "Everybody in the city pities him; he goes about like a man no longer in possession of his ideas; he stops without an object, and looks without seeing."

"Every sorrow has its peculiar mode of expression," said Margaret, restraining her tears. "What do you wish to say to me?" she resumed, after a pause, with chilling dignity.

"Mademoiselle," replied Emmanuel, in an agitated voice, "have I the right to speak to you as I am about to do? See nothing in it, I conjure you, but my desire to be useful to you, and let me believe that a professor may interest himself in the fate of his pupils, even to being anxious regarding their future lives. Your brother Gabriel is more than fifteen years old. He is in the second class, and it is certainly time that his studies should be directed with reference to the career he is to follow. Your father should decide this question; but if he pays no attention to it, will it not be a misfortune for Gabriel? Would it not also be very mortifying to your father, if you were to remark that he does not pay attention to his son? In such a conjuncture, should you not consult your brother as to his tastes, and lead him to

choose a career for himself, so that, if, at a later period, his father wishes him to be a magistrate, a business man, or a soldier, Gabriel may already have the necessary special knowledge. I cannot believe that either you or M. Claes would wish him to remain idle."

"Oh, no, Monsieur Emmanuel," said Margaret, "I thank you, you are quite right. When my mother required us to make lace, and taught us with so much care to draw, to sew, to embroider, to play upon the piano, she often said that we did not know what might happen to us in life. Gabriel ought to have a personal value and a complete education. But what is the most suitable career for a man?"

"Mademoiselle," said Emmanuel, trembling with happiness, "Gabriel belongs to the class which shows the most aptitude for mathematics; if he were to enter the Polytechnic School, I think he would acquire attainments that would be useful to him in any career; on leaving it, he would be in a position to choose the profession for which he felt the strongest inclination. Without having up to that period, in any way prejudiced his future prospects, you will have gained time. Men graduating with honor at that school are well received everywhere. It has furnished ministers, diplomatists, savants, engineers, generals, sailors, magistrates, manufacturers and bankers. There is nothing, therefore, extraordinary in the fact of a young man, rich and of good family, studying with the view of being

admitted to it. If Gabriel should decide to do so, I would ask you—If I did, would you consent? Say yes!"

"What is it?"

"To be his private tutor," he replied, trembling.

Margaret looked at M. de Solis, took his hand, and said:

"Yes." She paused, and then added, in an agitated voice: "How truly I appreciate the delicacy which prompts you to offer precisely what I may accept from you! From what you have said, I see you have thoughts of us. I thank you."

Although these words were very simply spoken, Emmanuel turned away his head to conceal the tears which the pleasure of being agreeable to Margaret brought to his eyes.

"I will bring them both to you," he said, when he had somewhat recovered himself; "to-morrow is a holiday."

He rose, bowed to Margaret, who followed him; and when in the court he saw her still at the door of the dining-room, from whence she gave him a friendly parting nod.

After dinner the notary came to visit M. Claes, and took his seat in the garden, between his cousin and Margaret, precisely on the bench where Emmanuel had sat.

"My dear cousin," he said, "I have come this evening to talk to you on business. Forty-three days have passed since your wife's decease."

"I have not counted them," said Balthazar, wiping away a tear, which the legal word *decease* summoned to his eye.

"Oh, sir," said Margaret, looking at the notary, "how can you—"

"But, my fair cousin, we notaries are forced to reckon the delays which are fixed by law. You and your co-heirs are particularly concerned. M. Claes has none but minor children, and he is bound to make an inventory within the forty-five days which follow the decease of his wife, in order to ascertain the value of the common property. Ought you not to know whether this common property is good or the contrary, that you may either accept it, or simply claim your rights as minors?"

Margaret rose.

"Remain where you are, cousin," said Pierquin; "these matters concern you—you and your father. You know how I sympathize with you in your sorrows; but I must draw your attention to-day to these details, without which you might all of you be very unpleasantly situated. I am only doing my duty as the family notary."

"He is right," said Claes.

"The delay expires in two days," resumed Pierquin; "I must, therefore, proceed to-morrow to open the inventory, if it is only to put off the payment of the inheritance tax, which the Exchequer demands. The Exchequer has no heart, it has no respect for feelings; it claps its claws on us at one

time as at another. Every day, then, from ten till four, my clerk and I will be here, with the government appraiser, Monsieur Raparlier. When we have finished in the city, we will go to the country. With regard to the forest of Waignies, we will talk about that presently. This being disposed of, let us pass to another point. We have a family council to convoke for the purpose of appointing a deputy-guardian. M. Conyncks, of Bruges, is your nearest relation, at present; but he has become a Belgian. You ought to write to him, cousin, on the subject; you could learn whether the worthy man has any inclination to fix his residence in France, where he possesses a fine property, and you might thus prevail upon him to come with his daughter and live in French Flanders. If he refuses, I will see about composing the council according to the degrees of relationship."

"Of what use is an inventory?" asked Margaret.

"To ascertain rights and values, the assets and the debts. When the account is clearly made out, the family council takes, for the benefit of the minors, the course it judges—"

"Pierquin," said Claes, rising from the bench, "proceed in any way you think necessary for the preservation of the rights of my children; but let us avoid the sorrow of selling anything that belonged to my beloved—"

He could not finish; but he spoke these words

with so noble an air, and in so feeling a tone, that Margaret took his hand and kissed it.

"To-morrow, then," said Pierquin.

"Come to breakfast," said Claes; and then, appearing to recollect himself, he added: "By my marriage-contract, which was made according to the customs of Hainault, my wife was exempted from making an inventory, to avoid tormenting her, and I, most probably, am not bound to make one either."

"Oh, how fortunate!" exclaimed Margaret, "it would have been so painful to us!"

"Well, we will examine your contract to-morrow," replied the notary, with slight symptoms of confusion.

"Then you are not acquainted with it?" said Margaret.

This observation interrupted the conversation. The notary found himself too much embarrassed to resume it after his cousin's question.

"The devil is mixed up in this business," said he to himself in the court. "This absent man recovers his memory just in time to prevent our taking precautions against him. His children will be plundered as sure as two and two make four. To think of talking business to sentimental girls of nineteen! I have racked my brain to save the property of these children, by proceeding regularly, and having an understanding with the worthy Conyncks, and see what is the result! I am losing ground with Margaret, who will ask her father why I wanted to make

an inventory which she thinks useless; and M. Claes will answer that notaries have a mania for deeds and documents, and that we are notaries a good deal more than we are relations, cousins, or friends,—in short, he'll tell her a pack of nonsense!"

He shut the door with a bang, cursing all clients who ruin themselves out of sensibility.

Balthazar was right; no inventory was taken. Nothing, therefore, was decided as to the situation in which the father was placed with regard to his children. Several months passed away without any change in Claes' house. Gabriel, whose studies were skilfully directed by Emmanuel, who had made himself his preceptor, worked with steady application; he learned the modern languages, and prepared himself to pass the examination necessary to enter the Polytechnic School. Margaret and Felicie lived in absolute seclusion, going, nevertheless, for the sake of economy, to pass the fine season in their father's country-house.

M. Claes busied himself with his affairs, paid his debts by borrowing a considerable sum upon his property, and visited the forest of Waignies. Towards the middle of the year 1817, his sorrow, which had been gradually assuaged, left him alone and without defence against the monotony of the life he led, and which weighed heavily upon him. He struggled at first courageously against science, which revived insensibly, and would not allow himself to think of chemistry. And then he did think

of it. He was determined not to engage in it actively, but to busy himself with it theoretically. This constant study caused his passion to surge up again till it became once more tyrannical. He discussed within himself whether he had promised not to continue his researches, and remembered that his wife would not let him take an oath. Even if he had promised himself not to pursue the solution of his problem, might he not be allowed to change his mind when he saw a clear prospect of success? He was already fifty-nine years old; at that age, the idea which domineered over him acquired the harsh obstinacy by which monomanias always commence. Circumstances still further conspired against his wavering loyalty.

The peace which Europe enjoyed had permitted the circulation of the discoveries and scientific ideas acquired during the war by the learned of different countries, between whom there had existed no such relations for nearly twenty years. Science had made great strides. Claes found that the progress of chemistry was directed, unknown to chemists, towards the object of his researches. People addicted to the higher walks of science thought, as he did, that light, heat, electricity, galvanism and magnetism, were the different effects of one same cause; that the difference which existed between bodies till then deemed simple, must be produced by differing proportions of an unknown principle. The fear that anybody else should discover the

reduction of metals and the constituent principle of electricity, two discoveries which led up to the solution of the chemical Absolute, augmented what the inhabitants of Douay termed a madness, and exalted his desires to a paroxysm—one which persons passionately addicted to the sciences, or those who have experienced the tyranny of particular ideas, will easily conceive.

Thus Balthazar was carried away by a passion all the more violent for having slept for a time. Margaret, who watched the fluctuations of mind through which her father passed, re-opened the parlor. By residing in it she revived the painful memories of the death of her mother, and, in fact, succeeded in re-awakening her father's regrets, and retarding for a time his fall into the gulf into which he must nevertheless sink. She resolved to go into company, and forced Balthazar to seek distractions in that direction. Several proposals were made for her, and engaged Claes' attention, though Margaret positively declared she would not marry before she was twenty-five. In spite of the efforts of his daughter, in spite of violent internal struggles, Balthazar secretly resumed his labors at the beginning of winter. It was difficult to conceal such occupations from inquisitive women. One day Martha said to Margaret, while dressing her:

"Mademoiselle, we are lost! That monster, Mulquinier, who must be the devil in disguise, for I have never seen him make the sign of the cross, has gone

up into the garret once more. There is your father off for the infernal regions again! Pray God he does not kill you, as he did your poor dear mother!"

"It is not possible!" said Margaret.

"Come and see the proof of how they are carrying on."

Mademoiselle Claes ran to the window, and perceived, in fact, a slight smoke ascending from the chimney of the laboratory.

"I am twenty-one in a few months," she said, "and can oppose the dissipation of our fortune."

In thus giving way to his passion, Balthazar necessarily had less respect for the interests of his children than he had had for his wife. The barriers were less lofty, his conscience was freer, and his passion became stronger. Thus he pursued his career of glory, labor, hope and want, with the fury of a man fully convinced he was right. Certain of the result, he worked night and day, with a vehemence that alarmed his daughters, who were ignorant how little a man is injured by the labor he delights in.

As soon as her father had recommenced his experiments, Margaret retrenched all the superfluities of their table, and practiced a parsimony worthy of a miser, in which she was ably seconded by Felicie and Martha. Claes took no notice of this reform, which reduced his living to the strict necessaries of of life. In the first place he took no breakfast, then he descended from his laboratory at the very last moment to dinner, and ended by going to bed, after

remaining a few hours in the parlor with his daughters, without speaking a word. When he retired, they wished him good-night, and he mechanically allowed them to kiss him on both cheeks. Such conduct would have led to the greatest domestic misfortunes if Margaret had not been prepared to exercise the authority of a mother, and forearmed by a secret passion against the evils of such liberty.

Pierquin had ceased to visit his cousins, judging that they were on the high road to ruin. Balthazar's rural property, which produced an income of sixteen thousand francs, and was worth about six hundred thousand francs, was already saddled with a mortgage of three hundred thousand francs. Before resuming his chemical researches, Claes had borrowed a considerable sum; his income but just sufficed to pay the interest; but as, with the imprudence of men devoted to one idea, he abandoned his income to Margaret for household expenses, the notary calculated that in three years all his resources would be exhausted and that the legal gentleman would then consume the little that Balthazar had spared. Margaret's coldness had brought Pierquin to a state of almost hostile indifference. To give himself the right to refuse the hand of his cousin, if she became poor, he would say, with affected compassion, when speaking of the Claeses, "These poor people are ruined. I have done all I could to save them; but Mademoiselle Claes declined all the

resources of legal ingenuity which might have preserved them from want."

Appointed principal of the college of Douay, through the instrumentality of his uncle, Emmanuel, whose great merit had made him worthy of the post, came every evening to visit the two young girls, who summoned the duenna to the parlor as soon as their father had gone to bed. Young de Solis' gentle rap upon the knocker never failed. For three months past, encouraged by the delicate, mute gratitude with which Margaret accepted his friendly offices, he had become himself in her presence. The rays of his mind, pure as a diamond, shone without a cloud; and Margaret was able to appreciate its strength and duration by perceiving how inexhaustible was its source. She admired the flowers of his soul as they blossomed one by one, after having breathed their perfume beforehand. Every day Emmanuel gratified one more of Margaret's hopes, and kindled, in the enchanted regions of love, new lights to drive away the clouds, restore serenity to the heavens, and give color to the abundant riches till then buried in the shade.

Being thus more at his ease, Emmanuel was at liberty to display the fascinations of his heart, hitherto cautiously concealed—the expansive gaiety of youth, the simplicity which belongs to a life of devotion to study, and the treasures of a delicate mind which the world had not contaminated, all the innocent joyousness which so well becomes the age of

love. His mind and Margaret's understood each other better; they went together to the bottom of their hearts, and there discovered the same thoughts —pearls of the same clearness, pleasant, sweet, fresh harmonies, like those that wait beneath the sea, and, as they say, fascinate the divers! They came to understand each other by those exchanges of thought, by that alternating curiosity, which, with both of them, assumed the most delightful forms of sentiment. This was without false shame, but not without some mutual coquetry.

The two hours which Emmanuel spent every evening with the girls and Martha, enabled Margaret to endure the life of anguish and resignation upon which she had entered. Her love, thus ingenuously progressive, was her support. Emmanuel infused into his evidences of affection that natural grace which is so seductive, that mild yet brilliant wit which gives life to the uniformity of sentiment, as the facets of a precious stone relieve its monotony by bringing all its fires into play; delicious little ways, the secret of which dwells in loving hearts alone, and which make women faithful to the artistic hand which reproduces the same form with ever varying expression, faithful to the voice which never repeats a sentence without refreshing it with new modulations. Love is not only a sentiment, it is likewise an art. The simplest word, a precaution, a mere nothing, will reveal to a woman the great and sublime artist, who may touch her heart without stain-

ing it. The further Emmanuel went, the more charming became the expressions of his love.

"I am beforehand with Pierquin," he said, one evening, "he is coming to tell you a piece of bad news, I prefer informing you of it myself. Your father has sold your forest to speculators, who have resold it in shares; the trees are already cut down, all the timber is carried away. M. Claes has received three hundred thousand francs down, with which he has paid his debts in Paris, and to discharge them entirely, he has even been obliged to make an assignment of a hundred thousand francs out of the three hundred thousand which the purchasers have still to pay."

At this moment Pierquin came in.

"Well, my dear cousin," said he, "here you are, ruined! I told you it would be so; but you would not listen to me. Your father has a good appetite; he has gulped your forest down at the first mouthful. Your deputy-guardian, M. Conyncks, is at Amsterdam, where he is winding up his affairs, and Claes has seized the opportunity to strike his blow. This is not right. I have just written to the worthy Conyncks, but by the time he arrives the stew will be complete. You will be obliged to bring an action against your father; the suit will not be a long one, but it will be a disgraceful one, and M. Conyncks must commence it; the law requires it. This is the result of your obstinacy. Don't you see

now how prudent I was, and how truly devoted to your interests?"

"I bring you some good news, mademoiselle," said young de Solis, in his gentle tones; "Gabriel is admitted to the Polytechnic School. The difficulties in the way of his matriculation are removed."

Margaret thanked her friend with a smile, and said, "My savings were to some purpose! Martha, we must set to work to-morrow upon Gabriel's outfit. My poor Felicie, we shall have plenty to do," said she, kissing her sister's brow.

"He will come home to-morrow for ten days; he must be in Paris by the 15th of November."

"My cousin Gabriel acts prudently," said the notary, eyeing the young principal from head to foot, "he will need to make a fortune. But, my dear cousin, the honor of the family is at stake; will you listen to me this time?"

"No," said she, "if the subject is still marriage."

"What do you mean to do, then?"

"I, cousin? Nothing."

"But you are of age."

"I shall be in a few days. Have you," she continued, "a course of action to propose that will conciliate our interests and what we owe to our father, with the honor of the family?"

"Cousin, we can do nothing without your uncle. That being understood, I will come again when he returns."

"Adieu, sir," said Margaret.

"The poorer she is, the more prudish she grows," thought the notary. "Adieu, mademoiselle," he said, aloud. "Sir Principal, I am your humble servant." And he left the room without paying the least attention to Felicie or Martha.

"For the last two days, I have been studying the code, and I have consulted an old lawer, a friend of my uncle," said Emmanuel, in an agitated voice. "I will set out to-morrow, if you so authorize me, for Amsterdam. Listen to me, dear Margaret."

He pronounced this word for the first time; she thanked him for it with moistened eyes, by a smile and an inclination of the head. He stopped and pointed to Felicie and Martha.

"Speak before my sister," said Margaret, "she has no need of this discussion to teach her resignation to a life of privations and labor; she is so gentle and so courageous! But she ought to know how necessary courage is to us."

The sisters clasped hands and kissed each other, as if to exchange a mutual pledge of union in the face of misfortune.

"Leave us, Martha."

"Dear Margaret," resumed Emmanuel, allowing the happiness he felt at winning this small privilege of affection to be perceptible in the inflexion of his voice, "I have obtained the names and the residence of the purchasers who owe the remaining two hundred thousand francs purchase-money of the wood that has been cut down. To-morrow, with your

permission, a solicitor, acting in the name of M. Conyncks, who will not disavow him, will place a protest in their hands. In six days your great-uncle will be back, he will call a family council, and have Gabriel emancipated, he being now eighteen years old. You and your brother being authorized to exercise your rights, you will demand your share of the price of the wood. M. Claes cannot refuse you the two hundred thousand francs stopped by the protest; as to the other hundred thousand also due to you, you will obtain a bond and mortgage upon the house you inhabit. M. Conyncks will demand a bail-bond for the three hundred thousand francs which constitute the share of Mademoiselle Felicie and Jean. In this situation, your father will be forced to mortgage his property in the plain of Orchies, though it is already encumbered to the extent of three hundred thousand francs. The law gives a retroactive priority to mortgages entered in behalf of minors. Everything will thus be safe. M. Claes will henceforward have his hands tied; your lands are inalienable; he will no longer be able to borrow anything upon his own, which are pledged for more than their value. The affair will have been managed within the family, without scandal, without recourse to law. Your father will be forced to go on with his researches prudently, if not to discontinue them entirely."

"Yes," said Margaret, "but where will our income be? The hundred thousand francs mortgage upon

this house will bring us nothing, as we dwell in it. The product of my father's property in the plain of Orchies will pay the interest of the three hundred thousand francs due to strangers. What shall we have to live on?"

"In the first place," said Emmanuel, "by investing the fifty thousand francs of Gabriel's share in the public funds, you will have, according to present rates, more than four thousand francs interest, which will suffice for his board and tuition in Paris. Gabriel cannot dispose of the sum the house of his father is mortgaged for, nor of the capital of his own income; so you need not fear his dissipating a penny, and you will have one responsibility the less. Besides, have you not a hundred and fifty thousand francs of your own?"

"My father will ask me for them," she said, in an accent of terror, "and I shall not be able to refuse him."

"Well, dear Margaret, you yet may save them, by putting them out of your power. Invest them in government funds, in the name of your brother. The sum will yield you an income of twelve or thirteen thousand francs, upon which you can live, Emancipated minors being unable to alienate anything without the consent of a family council, you will thus gain three years tranquillity. By that time, your father will have solved his problem, or, what is more likely, will have abandoned it; Gabriel, then of age, will restore you the capital invested in his

name, so that you may settle the account among the four."

Margaret asked for further explanations of certain legal matters which she could not comprehend at first. It was certainly a new scene, this of two lovers studying a volume of the code, which Emmanuel had procured to teach his mistress the laws relative to the property of minors; she soon seized their spirit, thanks to the penetration natural to women, rendered still keener by love.

The next day Gabriel returned to the paternal roof. When M. de Solis gave him into the hands of Balthazar, announcing his admission to the Polytechnic School, the father thanked the principal by a wave of his hand, and said, "I am very glad of it, Gabriel will be a savant!"

"Oh, my brother!" said Margaret, as she saw Balthazar returning to his laboratory; "work hard, but do not spend much money! Do all that ought to be done, but be economical! On the days you go to Paris, visit our friends, our relatives, so as not to contract any of the tastes which ruin young men. Your education amounts to nearly three thousand francs, so you will have a thousand francs left for pocket-money, which ought to be enough."

"I will be answerable for him," replied Emmanuel de Solis, slapping his pupil on the shoulder.

A month afterwards, M. de Conyncks had, in concert with Margaret, obtained from Claes all the desired guarantees. The plans so wisely conceived

by Emmanuel de Solis were approved and executed to their full extent. Confronted by the law, and in presence of his cousin, whose severe probity was not to be trifled with in questions of honor, Balthazar, ashamed of the sale he had consented to when harassed by his creditors, submitted to everything that was asked of him. Glad to be able to repair the damage he had almost involuntarily done his children, he signed the deeds with the preoccupation of a savant. He had become completely short-sighted, like the negro who sells his wife in the morning for a drop of brandy, and cries for her when night comes. He did not give one single glance to the morrow; he never asked himself what would be his resources when he had melted down his last coin; he prosecuted his labors, continued his purchases, without knowing that he was nothing more than the titular possessor of his house or of his property, and that it would be impossible for him—thanks to the severity of the laws—to obtain a sou upon the property of which he was, in a manner, the judicial guardian.

The year 1818 passed away without any untoward event. The two young girls paid the amounts necessary for the education of Jean, and for the household expenses, with the eighteen thousand francs yielded by their investment in Gabriel's name, the half-yearly dividends of which were regularly sent them by their brother. M. de Solis lost his uncle in the month of December of this year. One morning

Margaret learned that her father had sold his collection of tulips, the furniture of the front house, and all the silver plate. She was obliged to redeem the plate absolutely necessary for the table, and had it marked with her own cipher. Up to that day, she had kept silent upon Balthazar's depredations; but in the evening, after dinner, she requested Felicie to leave her alone with her father; and when he was seated, according to his custom, by the chimney corner in the parlor, Margaret said to him:

"My dear father, you are the master here, and can sell everything, even your children. We all obey you without a murmur; but I am forced to bring to your notice that we are without money, that we have scarcely the means of living through this year, and that Felicie and I shall be obliged to work night and day at the lace dress we have undertaken, to pay for Jean's schooling. I conjure you, my good father, to discontinue your labors."

"You are right, my child; in six weeks all will be ended. I shall have found the Absolute, or the Absolute will be a thing not to be found. You will then all be rich, with millions to—"

"In the mean time, leave us a morsel of bread, father!" she replied.

"Bread!—what! no bread here!" said Claes, in an accent of terror; "no bread in the house of Claes! Where's all our property?"

"You have razed the forest of Waignies. The land is encumbered, and can produce nothing. As

for your farms at Orchies, the rents are not sufficient to pay the interest of the sums you have borrowed."

"What do we live on, then?" he asked.

Margaret showed him her needle, and added: "Gabriel's income helps us, but it is not sufficient. I will make the two ends of the year meet, if you will not overwhelm me with bills which I do not expect; you never tell me of the purchases you make in the city. When I think I am provided for the quarter, and my little arrangements are all made, in comes a bill for soda, potash, zinc, sulphur, and I know not what!"

"My dear child, six weeks more patience! After that I will conduct myself prudently. And you shall see wonders, my little Margaret!"

"It is quite time you thought of your affairs. You have sold everything—pictures, tulips, plate; we have nothing left! At least contract no new debts!"

"I will not contract any more," said the old man.

"Any more!" she cried. "So you have some, already?"

"Nothing; mere trifles," he replied, casting down his eyes and blushing.

Margaret felt herself, for the first time, humbled by the degradation of her father, and suffered so much from it, that she did not dare to interrogate him. A month after this scene, a banker of the city came to demand payment of a note of hand for ten thousand francs, signed by Claes. Margaret having

requested the banker to wait during the day, and evincing regret that she had not been made aware of the existence of the note, the banker informed her that the house of Protez and Chiffreville had nine others, of the same amount, falling due from month to month.

"All is over!" cried Margaret; "the hour has come!"

She sent for her father, and walked with hasty steps, and in great agitation, about the parlor, talking to herself. "We must get one hundred thousand francs, or have our father go to prison! What is to be done?"

Balthazar did not come down. Tired of waiting for him, Margaret went up to the laboratory. On entering, she found her father in an immense room, strongly lighted, filled with machines and dusty glass vessels; here and there books, tables loaded with ticketed and numbered parcels. The disorder flowing from the chemist's preoccupation was everywhere repugnant to the cleanly habits of the Flemings. Over a grand museum of bottles, retorts, metals, fantastically colored crystallizations, specimens nailed to the walls or carelessly tossed upon the furnaces, towered Balthazar Claes, without his coat, his arms bare like those of a workman, and his open breast covered with hair as white as that on his head. His eyes were intensely, frightfully, fixed upon a pneumatic machine. The recipient of this machine was surmounted and closed by a lens of

double convex glasses, the interior of which was filled with alcohol; it collected the rays of the sun, which entered by one of the compartments of the little garret window. The recipient, the plateau of which was isolated, communicated with the wires of an immense voltaic battery.

Lemulquinier, occupied in moving the plature of this machine, which was mounted on a movable axle, in order to keep the lens in a direction perpendicular to the rays of the sun, rose up, his face black with dust, exclaiming:

"Ah, mademoiselle, don't come in!"

The appearance of her father, who, almost kneeling before his machine, received the light of the sun full upon his head, the thin hairs of which resembled silver thread; his skull scored with frequent bumps, his countenance contracted by breathless expectation; the singularity of the objects which surrounded him; the obscurity of vast parts of this immense loft, from which strange machines seemed to start forth—all contributed to strike Margaret, who said to herself with an accent of terror:

"My father is mad!" She approached him, and whispered in his ear: "Send away Lemulquinier."

"No, no, my child; I want him. I am expecting the issue of a beautiful experiment, which nobody else has dreamed of, We have been watching three days for a ray of the sun. I have found the means of subjecting metals, in a perfect void, to concentrated rays of the sun and electric currents. Look;

in a moment the most energetic action a chemist can produce will burst forth, and I alone—"

"Yes, father, but instead of vaporizing metals, you ought to keep them to pay your notes of hand with!"

"Wait! wait! I tell you."

"M. Mersktus has been here, father; he demands ten thousand francs at four o'clock!"

"Yes, yes, I know; presently. I did sign a few such notes to fall due this month, that's true; but I thought I should have found the Absolute. Good God! if it were a July sun my experiment would succeed!"

He clutched his thin gray hair, seated himself in an old cane chair, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"You are right, sir. It's all owing to that beggarly sun; it's too weak! the lazy, idle—"

The master and servant heeded Margaret no more.

"Leave us, Lemulquinier," she said.

"Ha! I see a new experiment," exclaimed Claes.

"Father, you must forget your experiments," said his daughter, when they were left alone; "you have a hundred thousand francs to pay, and we do not own a sou. Leave your laboratory, your honor is at stake. What will become of you in prison? Would you soil your gray hairs and the name of Claes by the infamy of bankruptcy? I oppose it; I will find strength to combat your madness; it would be

frightful to see you without bread in your old age. Open your eyes to our position! exert a little reason!"

"Madness!" cried Balthazar, who drew himself up, fixed his luminous eyes upon his daughter, crossed his arms upon his breast, and repeated the word "madness" so majestically, that Margaret trembled. "Ah, your mother would not have uttered that word!" he replied; "she was not ignorant of the importance of my researches; she studied a science in order to understand me; she knew that I worked for humanity's sake, that there was nothing selfish or sordid in me. The devotion of a woman who loves is, I see, beyond all filial affection. Yes, love is the most beautiful of all the sentiments! Exert reason, indeed!" he continued, striking his breast. "Do I want reason? Am I not myself? We are poor, my child, very well! I wish it to be so. I am your father, obey me. I will make you rich when I please. Your fortune! Bah! that is a trifle! When I have discovered a dissolvent for carbon, I will fill your parlor with diamonds; and that is nothing in comparison with what I am in search of. You surely can wait while I am consuming my life's blood in gigantic efforts."

"Father, I have no right to ask you for an account of the four millions you have squandered in this garret to no purpose. I will not mention my mother, whom you killed. If I had a husband, I should, no doubt, love him as much as my mother

loved you, and should be ready to sacrifice everything to him as she sacrificed everything to you. I have followed her orders by giving myself up to you entirely. I have proved it to you by not marrying, that you might not be forced to give in an account of your guardianship. Let us leave the past and think of the present. I have come here to represent the necessity you have yourself created. Money must be had to provide for your notes—do you understand that? There is nothing left here that can be seized but the portrait of your ancestor, Van Claes. I come, then, in the name of my mother, who proved too weak to defend her children against their father, and who ordered me to resist you; I come in the name of my brothers and sister, I come, father, in the name of all the Claeses, to command you to discontinue your experiments, and to make a fortune by other means before you resume them. If you arm yourself with your paternity, which only makes itself felt to kill us, I have, on my side, your ancestors and your honor, which speak with a louder voice than Chemistry; one's family takes precedence of Science. I have been too much your daughter!"

"And you now want to be my executioner," said Balthazar, in a weak voice. Margaret made her escape that she might not have to abandon the part she had undertaken to play; she thought she heard the voice of her mother saying: "*Do not thwart your father too much, love him dearly.*"

THE LOVERS STUDYING THE CODE.—*See Page* 199

"Mademoiselle is carrying things with a high hand!" said Lemulquinier, when he went down to breakfast. "We were about to lay our hands on the secret; we wanted nothing but one little ray of a July sun, for what a man master is! he has almost got into God's own shoes! We were within that," he said to Josette, clicking the nail of his right thumb against one of his front teeth, "of knowing the principle of everything, when, crash! up comes miss with her foolish notes of hand!"

"Very well! pay the notes out of your wages," retorted Martha.

"Is there no butter to put on my bread?" said Lemulquinier to Josette.

"Where is the money to buy butter with?" replied the cook, sharply. "You old monster, you, if you can make gold in your devil's kitchen, why can't you make a little butter? It ought not to be so difficult, and you might sell some at market to keep the pot boiling. The rest of us eat dry bread! The two young ladies are satisfied with bread and walnuts; would you be better fed than your employers? Mademoiselle means to spend only a hundred francs a month for the entire family. We make but one dinner, the whole of us. If you want dainties, you have your furnaces up yonder, where you make pearl stews, so that people talk of nothing else at market! Make some roast chicken, won't you?"

Lemulquinier took up his bread, and went out.

"He is going to buy something with his own

money," said Martha, "so much the better, it will be so much saved. What a miser he is, the Chinaman."

"We ought to have starved him out!" said Josette. "For a week past he has not scrubbed a thing. I do all his work, he is always up yonder; he might pay me for it by treating us to a few herrings; let him bring 'em, and see if I don't contrive to get some of 'em."

"Ah!" said Martha, "I hear mademoiselle crying. Her old conjurer of a father will swallow the house, without saying a Christian word. The sorcerer! In my country they would have burned him alive before this; but they have no more religion here than among the Moors of Africa."

Mademoiselle Claes but ill concealed her sobs as she crossed the gallery; she reached her chamber, took out her mother's letter, and read as follows:

"My Child,—If God permits it, my spirit will pervade your heart when you read these lines, the last I shall ever trace. They are full of love for my dear little ones, who are left abandoned to a demon I have not had the power to resist. He will have then consumed your bread, as he has consumed my life and even my love. You know, my beloved child, whether I loved your father! I am about to expire loving him less, since I am taking precautions against him which I would not have avowed in my lifetime. Yes, I am to keep in the depths of my coffin a last resource for the day when you have

reached the climax of misfortune. If he has reduced you to indigence, or if it be necessary to preserve your honor, my child, you will find at M. de Solis', if he is still living, and if not, at his nephew's, about a hundred and seventy thousand francs, which will help you to live. If nothing has subdued his passion, if his children are not a stronger barrier against him than my happiness has been, and cannot stop him in his criminal career, quit your father. Live at any rate. I could not abandon him, it was my duty to sacrifice myself. You, Margaret, save the family. I absolve you for anything you may do to defend Gabriel, Jean and Felicie. Take courage. Be the guardian-angel of the Claeses. Be firm, I do not dare to say without pity; but, to remedy the evil already done, some fortune must be preserved, and you must remember that you have but just escaped penury; nothing will check the fury of the passion that has made me what I am. Thus, my child, you will best show your fulness of heart by forgetting your heart; your dissimulation, if it be necessary to tell your father an untruth, will be glorious; your actions, however blamable they may appear, will be heroic if performed with the object of protecting the family. The virtuous M. de Solis has told me so; and never was conscience more pure or clear-sighted than his. I should not have had the strength to tell you this, even when dying. Always be respectful and kind in this horrible struggle. Resist while loving; refuse with gentleness. Thus my tears will

have been unseen, and my sorrows will not break out till after my death. Kiss my dear children in my name, at the moment you thus become their protectress.

"May God and the saints be with you!

"JOSEPHINE."

To this letter was attached an acknowledgment of MM. de Solis, uncle and nephew, by which they engaged to hand over the deposit left in their hands by Madame Claes to that one of her children who should present this letter.

"Martha," cried Margaret to the duenna, who promptly responded to the call; "go to M. Emmanuel, and request him to come here. Noble, discreet creature, he has never said a word of this to me," thought she, "to me, whose annoyances and sorrows he has made his own."

Emmanuel arrived before old Martha returned.

"So you have had secrets from me!" she said, pointing to the letter.

Emmanuel hung down his head.

"Margaret, you are very unhappy, are you not?" he replied, the tears rising to his eyes.

"Oh, yes! be my support, you whom my mother calls *our good Emmanuel*," she returned, showing him the contents of the letter, and unable to repress a feeling of joy at seeing her choice ratified by her mother.

"My blood and my life were yours from the day

I first saw you in the gallery," he replied, weeping with both joy and sorrow; "but I did not know, I did not even hope, that one day you would accept my blood. If you know me well, you know that my word is sacred. Pardon me this perfect obedience to the will of your mother; it did not become me to criticise her intentions."

'You have saved us," Margaret replied, interrupting him, and taking his arm to go down to the parlor.

After having learned from what source the sum Emmanuel had in his hands was derived, Margaret told him of the sad necessity which hung over the house.

"I must go and pay these notes," said Emmanuel. "If they are all in the hands of Mersktus, you will gain the interest. I will bring you the seventy thousand francs remaining. My poor uncle left me a similar sum in ducats, which it will be easy to transport hither secretly."

"Yes," she said, "bring them at night; when my father is asleep. Between us we will conceal them. If he knew I had money, he would—perhaps—take it from me by force. Oh, Emmanuel! to mistrust one's father!" she added, weeping, and leaning her brow upon the young man's breast.

This graceful, though melancholy little action, by which Margaret sought protection, was the first expression of that love still enveloped in melancholy, still confined within a sphere of grief; but her too

full heart was forced to overflow, and when it did so, it was under the weight of the merest trifle.

"What is to be done? What will become of him? He sees nothing, he cares for nothing, either on his own account or on ours, or how could he live in that garret, where the air is so burning hot?"

"What can you expect from a man who every moment is exclaiming, with Richard III., 'My kingdom for a horse!'" said Emmanuel. "He will always be pitiless, and you must learn to be no less so. Pay these notes, give him, if you like, your own fortune; but that of your sister, that of your brothers, is neither his nor yours."

"Give him my fortune!" she said, pressing Emmanuel's hand, and giving him a look beamign with love. "You advise me to do so, whilst Pierquin invented a thousand falsehoods to persuade me to keep it."

"Alas! I am an egotist, perhaps, in my own way," he returned; "sometimes I wish you to be without fortune, it seems as if you would then be nearer to me; and then, at others, I wish you rich and happy, and feel that it is a narrow view of things to fancy ourselves separated by the poor grandeurs of wealth."

"Do not let us talk of ourselves, dear!"

"Of ourselves!" he repeated, intoxicated with joy.

Then, after a pause he added, "The evil is great, but it is not irreparable."

"It will be remedied by ourselves alone; the Claes family has no longer a head. Into what gulf has my father fallen, that he should have come to be no longer a father or a man, to have no notion of the just or the unjust; for great, generous, honest as he is, he has dissipated, in spite of the law, the property of his children, whose protector he should have been! What can he be seeking for?"

"Unfortunately, my dear Margaret, if he is wrong as the head of a family, he is scientifically right, and a score of men in Europe will admire him when all the rest will accuse him of madness; but you can without scruple refuse him the fortune of his children. Discoveries have always been matters of chance. If your father is to find the solution of his problem, he will find it without all this expense, and perhaps at the very moment he is despairing of it."

"My poor mother is happy," said Margaret; "she would have suffered death a thousand times before dying, she who perished in her first tilt with science. But this struggle has no end."

"There is an end," replied Emmanuel. "When your resources are exhausted, M. Claes will no longer get credit, and will stop."

"Let him stop this very day, then!" cried Margaret; "we are without means."

M. de Solis went to redeem the notes, and brought them back to Margaret. Balthazar came down a few minutes before dinner, contrary to his usual custom. For the first time in two years, his daughter

perceived unequivocal symptoms of deep sadness in his countenance; he had become, for the moment, a father again; reason had expelled science. He looked into the court, and into the garden, and when he was certain of being alone with his daughter, he approached her with a manner full of melancholy and kindness.

"My child," he said, taking her hand and pressing it affectionately, "forgive your old father! Yes, Margaret, I have been wrong, you alone are right. As long as I am unable to find what I am seeking, I am a miserable wretch. I will leave this place. I will not stay to see Van Claes sold," he added, pointing to the portrait of the martyr. "He died for liberty, I shall die for science;—he venerated, I hated."

"Hated, father! no!" Margaret cried, throwing her arms round his neck. "We all adore you; do we not, Felicie?" she said to her sister, who came in at the moment.

"What is the matter, dear father?" said the younger daughter, taking his hand.

"I have ruined you!"

"Never think of that," said Felicie; "our brothers will make our fortunes; Jean is still at the head of his class."

"Look here, father," said Margaret, leading her father in a manner at once graceful and filial towards the mantelpiece, and taking several papers from beneath the clock; "here are your notes of hand,

but do not sign any more, there would be nothing to pay them with."

"So you have money, Margaret?" whispered Balthazar in his daughter's ear, when he had a little recovered from his surprise.

This question almost suffocated the heroic girl; such delirium, such joy, such hope gleamed from her father's countenance, as he looked around him, apparently in search of gold.

"Father," she said, with a painful accent, "I have my own fortune."

"Give it me," said he, allowing a greedy gesture to escape him,—"give it me, and I will return it to you a hundred fold."

"Yes, I will give it you," replied Margaret, looking at Balthazar, who did not comprehend what his daughter meant.

"Ah! my beloved child!" he exclaimed, "you will save my life! I have conceived one last experiment, after which there is nothing possible. If I do not succeed this time, I must abandon the search. Give me your arm; come, my darling, and I will make you the happiest woman on earth! You restore me to happiness, to glory! You give me the means of loading you with riches! I will overwhelm you with jewels and treasures!"

He kissed his daughter's brow, he took her hands, he pressed them, and showed his joy by caresses which appeared to Margaret almost servile. During dinner, Balthazar saw nothing but her; he watched

her with the earnestness, the attention, the eagerness of a lover with his mistress. Did she but move, he sought to divine her thought or her wish, and rose hastily to serve her. He made her feel ashamed, for his attentions bore a character of youth which contrasted harshly with his premature old age. But Margaret replied to all these winning ways by a picture of their present distress, in the form of a gentle hint, or a glance at the empty shelves of their dining-room.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed, "in six months we will fill them all with gold and wonders! You shall be a queen! Bah! all nature will be ours! We shall be above everything—and all by your means, Margaret. Margaret," he went on with a smile, "your very name is a prophecy. Margarita means a pearl. Sterne says so somewhere. Have you read Sterne? Should you like a Sterne? It would amuse you."

"The pearl is, they say, the effect of a disease," replied Margaret, "and we have suffered much already!"

"Oh, don't be cast down! You will make all who love you happy, you will be so powerful, so rich!"

"Mademoiselle has such a kind heart!" said Lemulquinier, whose face, which resembled a spoon for skimming soup, grimaced a painful smile.

During the rest of the evening Balthazar brought all the graces of his character, and all the charms of his conversation, to bear upon his daughters. Seductive as the serpent, his speech and looks

diffused a magnetic fluid, and he was prodigal of that power of genius, that delightful spirit, which had fascinated Josephine, and he placed, so to say, his daughters in his heart.

When Emmanuel de Solis came, he found for the first time in a long while, the father and daughters together. In spite of his reserve, the young principal was subdued by the influence of the scene, for the manners and conversation of Balthazar possessed an irresistible charm. Although plunged deeply in the abysses of thought, and incessantly occupied in observing the moral world, men of science, nevertheless, notice the minutest details of the sphere in which they live. They are deficient in the sense of time and place rather than absent, and are never in harmony with things about them, they know and yet forget everything; they prejudge the future, prophesy for themselves alone, are aware of an event before it happens, but have never said anything about it. If, in the silence of meditation, they have made use of their power to observe what is passing around them, it is sufficient for them to have divined it. Labor carries them away, and they almost always apply the knowledge they have acquired of the affairs of life, erroneously.

Sometimes, when they are roused from their social apathy, or when they fall from the moral into the external world, they come thither with a teeming memory, and seem quite familiar with everything. Thus Balthazar, who joined perspicacity of heart to

perspicacity of brain, knew all his daughter's past; he knew, or had guessed, the slightest events of the mysterious love which united her with Emmanuel; he proved it to them with tact, and sanctioned their affection by sharing it. It was the sweetest flattery a father could pay, and the two lovers were unable to resist it.

This evening was delightful in the contrast it offered to the griefs which threatened the lives of these poor children. When after having, so to say, filled them with his light and bathed them in tenderness, Balthazar retired, Emmanuel de Solis, who had till that moment maintained an air of embarrassment, relieved himself of the three thousand ducats in gold, which he had kept in his pockets, that they might not be seen. He laid them on Margaret's work-table, and she covered them with the linen she was at work upon; after which he went to fetch the rest of the sum. When he returned, Felicie was gone to bed. Eleven o'clock struck. Martha, who sat up to undress her young mistress, was engaged with Felicie.

"Where shall we hide it?" said Margaret, who had not been able to resist the pleasure of handling some of the ducats—a childish whim which ruined her.

"I will raise this marble column, the pedestal of which is hollow," said Emmanuel; "you can slip the rolls of coins in, and the devil himself would never think of looking for them there."

As Margaret was making her last journey but one from the work-table to the column, she uttered a piercing cry, let fall the rolls, the coins of which burst the papers and were scattered about the floor; her father stood at the parlor door, with an expression of avidity upon his face that terrified her.

"What are you doing there?" he said, looking by turns at his daughter, chained by fear to the floor, and at the young man, who had instantly sprung up, but whose attitude, close to the column, was sufficiently significant. The rattle of the gold on the floor was horrible, and its being scattered about appeared prophetic.

"I was not mistaken, then," said Balthazar, sitting down; "I *did* hear the sound of gold."

He was no less agitated than the two young people, whose hearts beat so perfectly in unison, that their movements could be heard like the ticking of a pendulum, amidst the profound silence which prevailed all at once in the parlor.

"I am much obliged to you, M. de Solis," said Margaret to Emmanuel, with a glance which plainly said, "Help me save this sum."

"What! this gold—" resumed Balthazar, darting glances of fearful lucidity at his daughter and Emmanuel.

"This gold belongs to M. de Solis, who has had the kindness to lend it to me to meet our engagements," she replied.

Emmanuel blushed, and offered to retire.

"Sir," said Balthazar, stopping him by taking his arm, "do not evade the expression of my thanks."

"Sir, you owe me nothing. The money belongs to Mademoiselle Margaret, who borrows it of me upon her property," he replied, looking at his betrothed, who thanked him with an almost imperceptible motion of the eyelids.

"I will not allow that," said Claes, who took a pen and a sheet of paper from the table at which Felicie was wont to write, and turning towards the two astonished young people, said: "How much is there?"

Passion had rendered Balthazar more cunning than the sharpest of defrauding stewards would have been; the money was about to be his. Margaret and de Solis hesitated.

"Let us count it," he added.

"There are six thousand ducats," replied the young man.

"Seventy thousand francs," rejoined Claes.

The glance Margaret threw her lover gave him courage.

"Sir," said he, in a tremulous voice, "your signature is of no value—pardon me the purely technical expression. I this morning lent mademoiselle a hundred thousand francs to take up some notes that yon were not in a position to pay; you cannot, therefore, give me any security. These hundred and seventy thousand francs belong to your daughter, who has it in her power to dispose of them as she

thinks fit; but I only lent them to her upon her promise to sign an agreement by which I can get security upon her portion of the bare lands of Waignies."

Margaret turned away her head to conceal the tears which rose to her eyes. She was well acquainted with the purity of heart which distinguished Emmanuel. Brought up by his uncle in the most severe practice of the religious virtues, the young man entertained an especial horror for falsehood; after having offered Margaret his life and his heart, he now made her, still further, the sacrifice of his conscience.

"Farewell, sir," said Balthazar to him, "I thought you would have had more confidence in a man who looked upon you with the eyes of a father."

After exchanging a deplorable look with Margaret, Emmanuel was conducted by Martha to the street-door, which she closed and fastened after him.

The moment Claes was left alone with his daughter, he said, "You love me, do you not?"

"Attempt no subterfuges, father; you wish to have this money, but you shall not have it."

She began to pick up the ducats, her father silently helping her to get them together and verify the amount, which Margaret allowed him to do without evincing the least distrust. The two thousand ducats being collected in piles, Balthazar said, in a tone of despair:

"Margaret, I must have this money!"

"It would be a robbery if you took it," she replied, coldly. "Listen to me, father; it would be far better to kill us at a single blow than to ask us to suffer a thousand deaths every day. Answer, which of us ought to yield, we or you?"

"You will assassinate your father, then," he returned.

"We shall avenge our mother," she said, pointing to the place where her mother had died.

"Daughter! daughter! if you knew what it was for, you would not speak thus to me. Listen, I will explain the problem to you. But you would not understand me!" he cried in a tone of despair. "Come! give it to me! Have faith in your father. Yes, I know I gave your mother great pain; that I have dissipated, to use the term of the ignorant, my own fortune, and damaged yours; that you all of you work for what you call a madness; but my angel, my well-beloved, my love, Margaret, listen to me! If I do not succeed, I will give myself up and will obey you as you ought to obey me. I will do as you wish; I will place the management of my fortune in your hands; I will no longer be the guardian of my children, I will divest myself of all authority. I swear it, by the memory of your mother!" he cried, bursting into tears. Margaret turned away her head that she might not see his face bedewed with tears, and Claes threw himself on his knees at her feet, thinking she was about to yield.

"Margaret! Margaret! give it to me! give it to

me! What are sixty thousand francs in comparison with eternal remorse? For I shall die! This will kill me! Listen to me, my word shall be sacred. If I fail, I will abandon the task; I will quit Flanders, France even, if you require it, and go and work as a laborer in order to retrieve my fortune, sou by sou, and repay my children what science has robbed them of."

Margaret endeavored to raise her father up, but he persisted in remaining on his knees, and added, with a fresh flood of tears: "Be, for once and for the last time, tender and devoted! If I do not succeed, I will myself admit the justice of your severity. You shall call me an old madman! You shall say I'm a bad father! You shall even pronounce me an ignorant dolt! And when I hear the words, I will kiss your hand. You may beat me, if you like, and as you strike me, I will bless you as the best of daughters, in remembrance of your having given me your blood."

"If it only concerned my blood, I would give it up, but can I see my brothers and my sister destroyed by Science? No! Cease, cease!" she said, wiping her eyes, and repulsing her father's caressing hands.

"Sixty thousand francs and two months," he exclaimed, rising in a rage, "for that is all I want; but my daughter places herself between glory, riches, and me. Be accursed, then!" he added. "You are neither a daughter nor a woman; you have no

heart; you will be neither a mother nor a wife. Let me have it! Come, dear, blessed angel, my beloved child, I will adore you," he cried, reaching his hand towards the gold with a movement of fierce energy.

"I am without defence against force, but God and the great Claes see us," said Margaret, pointing to the portrait.

"Well, then, try to live covered with the blood of your father!" cried Balthazar, casting a look of horror upon her. He arose, looked round the parlor and went slowly out. On reaching the door, he turned round as a mendicant would have done, and appealed to his daughter by a gesture, to which Margaret only replied by a negative shake of the head.

"Adieu, my daughter," he said, gently, "try and be happy!"

When he had disappeared, Margaret remained in a sort of stupor, which had the effect of isolating her from the earth; she was no longer in the parlor, she no longer felt that she had a body, she had wings and flew through the spaces of the moral world, where everything is immense, where thought brings distance and time together, where some hand divine lifts the curtain that shrouds the future.

It appeared to her that whole days passed away between every step made by her father in ascending the stairs, and then a shudder of horror crept over her as she heard him enter his chamber. Guided by a presentiment which diffused through

her soul the vivid glare of a flash of lightning, she sprang up the stairs, without light, without noise, with the swiftness of an arrow, and saw her father standing up with a pistol pointed towards his forehead.

"Take it all!" she cried, rushing towards him.

She sank into a chair; and Balthazar, on seeing how pale she was, began to weep as old men weep; he became childish, he kissed her brow, he uttered words without meaning, he was ready to jump for joy.

"Enough, enough, father!" said Margaret; "remember your promise. If you do not succeed, you will obey me."

"Yes."

"Oh, mother!" she said, turning towards Madame Claes' bedroom, "you would have given it all—would you not?"

"Sleep in peace," said Balthazar, "you are a good girl."

"Sleep!" she exclaimed, "I no longer enjoy the nights of my youth; you are making me old, father, just as you slowly withered the heart of my mother."

"Poor child! I wish I could reassure you by explaining the effects of the magnificent experiment I have just conceived; you would then comprehend—"

"I comprehend nothing but our ruin," she said, with a sigh, as she left him.

The next morning was a holiday, and Emmanuel brought Jean.

"Well?" he said, in a melancholy tone, as he accosted Margaret.

"I have yielded," replied she.

"My dear love!" said the young man, with a mingled expression of joy and sorrow, "if you had resisted I should have admired you; but I adore you in your weakness."

"My poor Emmanuel, what have we left?"

"Leave that to me," said de Solis, radiant with hope, "we love each other, and all will be well."

A few months passed away in perfect tranquillity. M. de Solis made Margaret understand that her poor savings would never constitute a fortune, and advised her to live comfortably, taking the remains of the sum of which he had been the depositary, for household expenses. During this period, Margaret was a prey to anxieties similar to those that had agitated her mother in the same circumstances. However incredulous she might be, she had come to hope in the genius of her father. By an inexplicable phenomenon, many people entertain hope without having faith. Hope is the blossom of desire, faith is the fruit of certainty. Margaret said to herself, "If my father succeeds, we shall be happy." Claes and Lemulquinier alone said, "We shall succeed."

Unfortunately, from day to day, Balthazar's countenance became sadder and sadder. When he

came down to dinner, he sometimes did not dare to look his daughter in the face; but at others, his features beamed with triumph. Margaret employed her evenings in listening to young de Solis' explanation of several legal difficulties; she overwhelmed her father with questions relative to their family connections; and having completed her masculine education, she was evidently preparing to execute the plan she had been meditating, if her father should once more succumb in his duel with the Unknown.

Early in July, Balthazar passed a whole day seated on a bench in the garden, plunged in melancholy reflections. He looked several times at the vacant tulip-bed, at the windows of his wife's chamber; he doubtless shuddered at thinking what his struggle had cost him; his movements denoted thoughts that had nothing to do with science. Margaret came and seated herself beside him, with her work, a short time before dinner.

"Well, father, you have not succeeded?"

"No, my child."

"Ah!" she added, in a kind tone, "I will not make you any reproach, we are both equally guilty. I only claim the execution of your promise; it must be kept sacred; you are a Claes. Your children will surround you with love and respect; but from this day you belong to me, and owe me obedience. Do not be uneasy—my reign will be mild, and I will even labor to bring it speedily to an end. I am

going to take Martha with me, and shall leave you for about a month, in which time I shall be entirely taken up with your welfare; for," she added, kissing his brow, "remember, you are my child now. To-morrow, Felicie will assume the management of the family. The poor child is only seventeen, and could not resist you; be generous, and do not ask her for a sou, for she will have no more than will be strictly necessary for household expenses. Have courage, abandon your labors and studies for two or three years. The problem will ripen, I shall have saved money enough to enable you to solve it, and you will solve it. There, now, is not your queen clement? Tell me."

"All is not lost, then?" said the old man.

"No, if you are faithful to your promise."

"I will obey you, my daughter," replied Claes, with profound emotion.

The next day, M. Conyncks of Cambrai came to fetch his grand-niece. He was in a traveling-carriage, and would only stay long enough for Margaret and Martha to make themselves ready. Claes received his cousin politely, but he was evidently depressed and humiliated. Old Conyncks guessed Balthazar's thoughts, and while at breakfast, said to him, with rough frankness:

"I have some of your pictures, cousin; I have a taste for fine pictures; it is a ruinous passion, but we all have our mania."

"Dear uncle!" said Margaret.

"People say you are ruined, cousin; but a Claes always has treasures here," he said, tapping his forehead; "ay, and here, too, has he not?" he added, pointing to his heart. "Therefore, I depend upon you. I have found a few coins in my pocket-book, which I have put aside for you."

"Ah!" interrupted Balthazar, "I will return you treasures—"

"The only treasures we possess in Flanders, cousin, are patience and labor," replied Conyncks, sternly; "our ancestor there has those two words engraved upon his brow," he added, pointing to the portrait of president Van Claes.

Margaret kissed her father, bade him farewell, gave her instructions to Felicie and Josette, and set off, post, for Paris. The grand-uncle, who was now a widower, had but one daughter, twelve years of age, and possessed an immense fortune. It was not unlikely, therefore, that he would marry again, and the people of Douay took it into their heads that Mademoiselle Claes would espouse her grand-uncle. The rumor of this wealthy match brought Pierquin back to the residence of the Claeses. Great changes had taken place in the ideas of this excellent calculator.

For two years past the society of the city had been divided into two hostile camps. The nobility had formed a first circle, and the bourgeoisie a second, naturally very much opposed to the first. This sudden separation, which took place throughout France,

and divided it into two unfriendly nations, whose jealous irritations were continually on the increase, formed one of the principal reasons in the provinces for the adoption of the revolution of July, 1830. Between these two societies, the one of which was ultra-monarchical, and the other ultra-liberal, stood the public functionaries, admitted, according to their importance, into one or the other sphere, and who, at the moment of the fall of the legitimate line, were neuter. At the commencement of the struggle between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the royalist cafés reached an unheard-of splendor, and rivaled the liberal cafés so brilliantly, that this sort of gastronomic festivities cost, it is said, the lives of several persons who, like unsound mortars, were unable to go through the ordeal. Naturally, the two societies became exclusive, and purified themselves.

Although rich for a provincial, Pierquin was excluded from the aristocratic circle, and thrust back into that of the bourgeoisie. His self-love had suffered greatly from the successive checks he had received on finding himself insensibly cast off by people with whom he had been intimate. He had attained the age of forty, the latest period in life when men who intend marrying can expect to obtain young wives. All the matches he could pretend to belonged to the bourgeoisie, and his ambition was to obtain an introduction into the higher circle through a noble alliance, and to remain there.

The isolation in which M. Claes' family lived had

kept them ignorant of this social change. Although Claes belonged to the old aristocracy of the province, it was probable that his preoccupations would prevent his listening to the antipathies created by this new classification of persons. However poor she might be, a young lady of the house of Claes would bring her husband that fortune of vanity for which all parvenus are so anxious. Pierquin returned, then, to the house, with the secret intention of making the necessary sacrifices to bring about a marriage which would thenceforward realize his ambitious views. He kept company, in consequence, with Balthazar and Felicie during the absence of Margaret; but he, by degrees, found out that he had a formidable rival in Emmanuel de Solis.

The property left by the late abbé was said to be considerable; and, in the eyes of a man who openly reduced everything to figures, the young heir appeared more powerful by his money than by the attractions of his heart, about which Pierquin never troubled himself. This fortune restored all its importance to the name of de Solis. Gold and nobility were like two chandeliers, which, reflecting light from each other, double the brilliancy. The sincere affection which the young principal evinced for Felicie, whom he treated as a sister, excited the emulation of the notary. He endeavored to eclipse Emmanuel by mingling the fashionable jargon of the day and expressions of superficial gallantry, with the dreamy airs and elegiac pensiveness which suited his

countenance so well. When saying he was disenchanted with everything in the world, he would turn his eyes towards Felicie in a manner to make her believe that she alone could reconcile him to life.

Felicie, addressed for the first time in compliments, listened to the language which is always so sweet, even when false; she mistook its void for depth, and in the want which oppressed her of an object upon whom to fix the vague feelings with which her heart overflowed, she began to think of her cousin. Jealous, perhaps unconsciously, of the loving attentions which Emmanuel lavished upon her sister, she doubtless wished to see herself, like Margaret, the object of the looks, thoughts and cares of a man. Pierquin easily perceived the preference which Felicie gave him over Emmanuel, and this was a reason for his persisting in his efforts, so that he was led further than he intended.

Emmanuel watched the commencement of this passion, false, perhaps, as regarded the notary, but ingenuous on Felicie's part, while her future life was at stake. There ensued between the two cousins some of those pleasant little chats, of those hushed conversations behind Emmanuel, of those little deceits which give to a word, to a look, an expression whose insidious sweetness may lead to innocent errors. By means of the commerce kept up with Felicie, Pierquin endeavored to penetrate the secret of the journey undertaken by Margaret, in order to learn whether it had anything to do with marriage,

and whether he ought to abandon all hope; but, in spite of his great keenness, neither Balthazar nor Felicie could throw any light upon it, for the very good reason that they knew nothing of Margaret's plans, as, on assuming power, she appeared to have adopted its maxims, by keeping her projects secret.

The dull silence and dejection of Balthazar made the evenings hang very heavily. Although Emmanuel had succeeded in coaxing the chemist to a game of backgammon, Balthazar was inattentive to it; and the greater part of his time, this man, so great in intellect, appeared actually stupid. Disappointed in his hopes, humiliated by having squandered three fortunes, a gambler without money, he bowed beneath the weight of his ruin, beneath the burden of his deceived rather than destroyed hopes.

This man of genius, muzzled by necessity, and self-condemned, presented a spectacle so tragic as to touch the most insensible heart. Pierquin himself could not contemplate without respect, this imprisoned lion, whose eyes, full of subdued power, had become calm by dint of sorrow, dim by excess of light; whose looks demanded an alms the lips did not dare to ask for. At times, a flash passed over his withered face, re-animated by the conception of a fresh experiment; and then, if in looking about the parlor, the eyes of Balthazar stopped at the spot where his wife had expired, thin tears would roll like burning grains of sand in the desert of his eyeballs, and his head would sink down upon his chest.

He had lifted the world like a Titan, and the world fell back more heavily on his breast.

This gigantic grief, so heroically restrained, affected both Pierquin and Emmanuel, who, at times, felt themselves sufficiently moved to be willing to offer Balthazar the money requisite for a new series of experiments, so communicative are the convictions of genius! Both easily conceived how Madame Claes and Margaret had been induced to cast millions into the gulf; but reason speedily checked the promptings of the heart, and their emotions found vent in consolations which only rendered the pains of the thunder-stricken Titan more acute.

Claes never spoke of his eldest daughter, and did not appear to be uneasy at her absence, or at the silence she maintained in never writing to him or Felicie. When Pierquin or de Solis asked for news from her, he appeared disagreeably affected. Had he a presentiment that Margaret was acting against him? Did he feel humbled at having resigned the majestic rights of paternity to his child? Perhaps there were many of these reasons and many of these inexpressible feelings which pass like clouds through the soul, in the mute disgrace which he allowed to hang over Margaret.

However great great men may be, whether known or unknown, fortunate or unfortunate in their attempts, they all have littlenesses which connect them with humanity. By a double misfortune, they

suffer no less from their qualities than from their defects; and, perhaps, Balthazar had yet to familiarize himself with the chagrin of his wounded vanity. The life he led, and the evenings during which these four persons met together during Margaret's absence, were thus a life and evenings strongly marked with melancholy, and full of vague apprehensions. They were days as unproductive as the desolate sands of the shore, where, nevertheless, they gleaned the rare consolation of a few starveling flowers. The atmosphere seemed thick in the absence of the elder daughter, who had become the soul, the hope and the strength of the family.

Two months thus passed away, and Balthazar waited patiently for his daughter. Margaret was at length brought back to Douay by her uncle, who remained with them, instead of returning to Cambrai, no doubt with a view of supporting some stroke of policy meditated by his niece, by his own authority. Margaret's return was a little family fete. The notary and M. de Solis had been invited to dinner by Balthazar and Felicie. When the carriage stopped before the door, these four persons went out to receive the travelers with great demonstrations of joy. Margaret seemed happy to return to her paternal hearth; her eyes filled with tears as she crossed the court yard toward the parlor. When kissing her father, her filial caresses were not, however, without constraint; she blushed like a guilty wife who is not hardened enough to feign; but her

looks resumed their serenity when she turned towards M. de Solis, from whom she seemed to draw the strength to achieve the purpose she had secretly formed.

During dinner, notwithstanding the cheerfulness which animated their countenances and their conversation, the father and daughter looked at each other with distrust and curiosity. Balthazar asked Margaret no questions relative to her sojourn in Paris; and that, no doubt, from a sense of paternal dignity. Emmanuel de Solis followed this example of reserve. But Pierquin, who was accustomed to know all family secrets, said to Margaret, veiling his curiosity beneath an assumed heartiness of manner: "Well, my dear cousin, you have seen Paris, its theatres—"

"I have seen nothing in Paris," she replied. "I did not go there in search of amusement. The days passed away sadly enough; I was too impatient to see Douay again."

"If I had not been angry with her," said M. Conyncks, "she would not even have gone to the opera, and as it was, she found it quite tiresome there."

The evening was a trying one, every one felt under restraint, every one smiled out of season, and sought to exhibit that factitious gaiety which conceals a genuine anxiety. Margaret and Balthazar were a prey to dark and cruel apprehensions which reacted upon the hearts of all. The further the evening advanced, the more agitated became the counten-

ances of the father and the daughter. Now and then Margaret attempted to smile, but her gestures, her looks, the sound of her voice, betrayed a lively solicitude. MM. Conyncks and de Solis seemed to be aware of the cause of the secret emotions that agitated the noble girl, and appeared to encourage her by expressive glances.

Wounded at having been left in ignorance of a resolution and proceedings framed and undertaken on his account, Balthazar separated insensibly from his children and his friends, by affecting to preserve silence. Margaret, doubtless, was about to acquaint him with her decision in regard to him. To a great man, to a father, this situation was intolerable. He had arrived at an age when people dissemble nothing among their children, when the grasp of their ideas gives strength to their feelings, and he became more and more serious, thoughtful and gloomy, at seeing the moment of his civil death approach.

This evening was big with one of those crises in domestic life that can only be explained by images. Clouds and thunder were gathering in the heavens, there was laughter on the plains; every one was hot, felt the coming storm, looked up, and went hastily on his way. M. Conyncks was the first to retire, and was conducted to his bedroom by Balthazar. During his absence de Solis and Pierquin went away. Margaret wished the notary a friendly good-night; she said nothing to Emmanuel, but she pressed his hand with a look that moistened her eyes. She sent

Felicie to bed, and when Claes returned, he found his daughter alone.

"My good father," she said, in a tremulous voice, "it required no less than the serious circumstances in which we are placed to make me quit my home; but after much pain, and after surmounting great difficulties, I return to it with some chance of safety for you and for us all. Thanks to your name, to the influence of our uncle, and the recommendations of M. de Solis, we have obtained you the place of receiver of finances in Brittany; it is said to be worth from eighteen to twenty thousand francs a year. Our uncle signed your bonds. Here is your appointment," she said, taking a letter from her bag. "Your residence here, during our years of privation and sacrifice, would be intolerable; our father must continue in a situation at least equal to the one he has always lived in. I will ask you for nothing out of your income; you will employ it as may seem to you best. I only beg you to reflect that we have not one sou in the shape of revenue, and that we must live upon what Gabriel can spare us from his income. The city will know nothing of this claustral life. If you were with us, you would be an obstacle to the means my sister and I must employ in our endeavors to recover our competence. Is it any abuse of the authority you have given me, to place you in a situation to retrieve your fortune yourself? In a few years, if you desire it, you will be receiver-general."

"WELL, HERE ARE THE MEANS," SHE REPLIED.—*See Page* 242.

"And so, Margaret," said Balthazar, quietly, "you turn me out of my house!"

"I do not deserve so severe a reproach," she replied, repressing the tumultuous emotions of her heart, "you will return to us when you can reside in your native city in a becoming manner. Besides, father, have I not your word?" she added, coldly. "You are bound to obey me. My uncle has remained on purpose to accompany you to Brittany, so that you might not have to perform the journey alone."

"I will not go!" cried Balthazar, rising from his seat; "I stand in no need of the help of any one to retrieve my fortune, and pay what I owe my children."

"Very good," replied Margaret, without apparent emotion, "but I beg you to reflect upon our respective situations, which I will explain to you in a few words. If you remain in the house, your children will quit it in order to leave you the master of it."

"Margaret!" cried Balthazar.

"Then," she continued, without noticing her father's irritation, "it will be necessary to inform the minister of finance of your refusal, if you do not accept a lucrative and honorable office, which, in spite of our endeavors and influence, we should not have obtained without a few thousand-franc notes, skilfully slipped by my uncle into a lady's glove."

"To think of your leaving me!"

"Either you must leave us, or we must fly from you," she returned. 'If I were your only child, I

would imitate my mother, without murmuring against the fate you would bring me to; but my sister and my two brothers shall not perish of hunger or despair by your side. I promised it to her who died there," she said, pointing to the place where her mother's bed used to stand. "We have concealed our agonies from you—we have suffered in silence—now our strength is exhausted. We are not on the brink of a precipice—we are at the bottom, father! To get out of it, we not only require courage, but our efforts must not be incessantly thwarted by the caprices of a passion—"

"My dear children," cried Balthazar, seizing Margaret's hand, "I will help you—I will work—I—"

"Well, here are the means," she replied, holding out the ministerial letter.

"But, my angel, the means you offer me to redeem my fortune are too slow. You force me to forego the fruit of ten years of labor, and to lose the enormous sums that my laboratory represents. "There," he said pointing to the garret, "are all our resources."

Margaret walked towards the door, saying, "As you choose, father!"

"Daughter!—daughter!—you are very hard!" he replied, sitting down in a chair, and allowing her to leave the room.

The next morning Margaret learned from Lemulquinier that M. Claes had gone out.

This simple information made her turn pale; and

the expression of her countenance was so cruelly significant, that the old valet said:

"Don't be uneasy, mademoiselle—master said he would be back by eleven o'clock to breakfast. He has not been to bed. At two o'clock in the morning he was still standing in the parlor, looking through the windows at the roof of the laboratory. I watched in the kitchen and saw him. He was weeping; he is very unhappy. This is the famous month of July, when the sun may perhaps enrich us all; and if you would but—"

"Enough!—enough!" said Margaret, imagining all the thoughts that must have assailed her father.

A phenomenon which often occurs with persons leading a sedentary life, had already taken place in Balthazar; his life depended, so to say, upon the places with which he had identified himself; his thoughts, wedded to his laboratory and his house, rendered them indispensable to him, as is the Exchange to the stock gambler, who counts holidays as lost days. There were his hopes—there descended from heaven the only atmosphere from which his lungs could draw the vital air. This alliance of places and things with men, so powerful with weak natures, becomes almost tyrannical with persons devoted to science and study.

To leave his house was to Balthazar a renunciation of science—an abandonment of his problem—it was death. Margaret was a prey to great agitation till breakfast-time. The scene which had so affected

Balthazar as to lead him to attempt his life, recurred to her memory, and she dreaded a tragic end to the desperate situation into which her father had brought himself. She went in and out of the parlor, starting at every sound of the door-bell.

At length Balthazar returned. As he crossed the court, Margaret, who anxiously examined his countenance, could see nothing but the expression of passionate grief. When he entered the parlor, she advanced towards him to wish him good-day. He took her affectionately round the waist, pressed her to his heart, kissed her brow, and whispered in her ear: "I have been to get my passport."

The sound of his voice, his resigned look, the affectionate attitude of her father, almost broke the poor girl's heart and she turned away her head to conceal her tears; but finding she could not suppress them, she went into the garden, and returned after weeping at her ease. During breakfast, Balthazar appeared cheerful, like a man who had made up his mind.

"We are going to set out for Brittany, then, uncle, are we?" he said to M. Conyncks. "I have always had a desire to see that country."

"Living is very cheap there," replied the old man.

"Is father going to leave us?" exclaimed Felicie.

At that moment M. de Solis entered with Jean.

"You must leave him with us to-day," said Balthazar, placing Jean by his side. "I am going away to-morrow, and want to bid him farewell."

Emmanuel looked at Margaret, who hung down her head. It was a dull day, and every one was sad, repressing either their thoughts or their tears. It was not an absence, it was an exile. Every one was instinctively sensible, too, how humiliating it was for a father to declare his disasters thus publicly by accepting an office and leaving his family, at Balthazar's age. He alone was as great as Margaret was firm, and seemed to accept nobly this penitence for faults which the enthusiasm of genius had led him to commit.

When the evening had gone, and the father and daughter were left alone, Balthazar, who, during the whole day, had appeared as tender and affectionate as he had been in the happy hours of patriarchal life, held out his hand to Margaret, and said to her, with a sort of tenderness mingled with despair:

"Are you satisfied with your father?"

"You are worthy of him!" she replied, pointing to the portrait of Van Claes.

The next morning, Balthazar, followed by Lemulquinier, went up to his laboratory, to bid farewell to the hopes he had cherished, and which certain operations, already begun, represented as still living. The master and the valet looked at each other, with a gaze full of melancholy, on entering the apartment they were about, perhaps, to quit for ever. Balthazar contemplated the apparatus upon which his thoughts had so long been concentrated, and with each part of which was associated the remembrance

of an investigation or an experiment. He sadly desired Lemulquinier to allow all gases and dangerous acids to escape, and to separate such substances as might lead to explosions. Whilst taking these precautions, he uttered regrets as bitter as those of a criminal condemned to death, before ascending the scaffold.

"Here, however," he said, stopping before an evaporating dish, into which the two wires of a voltaic pile dipped, "is an experiment, the result of which we ought to wait for. If it were to succeed, frightful thought! my children would not drive away from home a father who could cast diamonds at their feet. It is a combination of carbon and sulphur," he added, talking to himself, "in which the carbon plays the part of an electro-positive body. The crystalization will commence at the negative pole, and, in case of decomposition, the carbon would be carried there crystalized—"

"Ah! that's the way of it, is it?" cried Lemulquinier, contemplating his master with admiration.

"Now," resumed Balthazar, after a pause, "the combination is subjected to the influence of this pile, which may act—"

"If you wish, I will increase the effect."

"No, no! it must be left just as it is. Repose and time are the essential conditions of crystalization."

"Dear me, yes! this crystalization must take its time," echoed the valet.

"If the temperature lowers, the sulphurate of car-

bon will crystalize," said Balthazar, continuing to express by fragments the indistinct thoughts of a meditation complete in his own mind; "but if the action of the pile operates under certain conditions of which I am ignorant—that must be watched—it is possible that—but what am I thinking about? We have done with chemistry, Mulquinier; we must go and manage an office in Brittany."

Claes left the room precipitately, and went down to partake of a last family breakfast, at which Pierquin and M. de Solis were present. Balthazar, anxious to have done with his scientific agony, bade adieu to his children, and got into the carriage with his uncle, all the family accompanying him to the door.

There, when Margaret had clasped her father in an embrace of despair, and he answered in a whisper, "You are a good girl, I shall bear you no grudge!" she sprang across the court, escaped into the parlor, threw herself upon her knees on the spot where her mother had died, and poured out an ardent prayer to God to grant her strength to accomplish the trying labors of her new life. She was already strengthened by an inward voice which had breathed into her heart the applause of the angels, and the thanks of her mother, when her sister, her brother, Emmanuel and Pierquin returned, after watching the carriage till it was out of sight.

"Now, mademoiselle, what do you mean to do?" said Pierquin.

"Save the house," she replied, quietly. "We own nearly thirteen hundred acres of land at Waignies. My intention is to have them cleared, to divide them into three farms, to construct the necessary buildings, and to let them; and I believe that in a few years, with great economy and patience, each of us," she said, pointing to her sister and her brother, "will have a farm of four hundred and odd acres, which may one day be worth nearly fifteen thousand francs a year. My brother Gabriel will take, as his share, this house, and all his government stocks. Then, we will one day surrender our father his fortune, freed from all incumbrance, by applying our incomes to the acquittal of his debts."

"But, my dear cousin," said the notary, stupefied at Margaret's knowledge of business and cool reasoning, "you will want more than two hundred thousand francs to clear your land, erect your buildings, and purchase cattle; where will you obtain this sum?"

"There my embarrassment begins," she said, looking alternately at the notary and M. de Solis, "I dare not ask it of my uncle, who is already security for my father."

"So you have friends!" cried Pierquin, perceiving all at once that the Claes young ladies would still be girls of more than five hundred thousand francs apiece.

Emmanuel looked at Margaret affectionately; but, unfortunately for him, Pierquin was still a notary in

the midst of his enthusiasm, and thus resumed: "I will lend you the two hundred thousand francs!"

Emmanuel and Margaret consulted each other by a look, which was a flash of light for Pierquin. Felicie blushed excessively, so happy was she to find her cousin as generous as she could wish. She looked at her sister, who all at once divined that during her absence the poor girl had allowed herself to be caught by a few commonplace compliments.

"You shall only pay me five per cent. interest," he said; "you may reimbuse me when you like, and you can give me a mortgage upon your lands. Don't be alarmed, you will only have the expenses to pay for your contracts. I will look out for good tenants, and will manage your affairs gratuitously, so as to help you as a relation should."

Emmanuel made a sign to Margaret, to advise her to refuse, but she was too much engaged in watching her sister's changes of countenance to notice him. After a pause, she looked at the notary, with an ironical smile, and said, of her own accord, to the great joy of M. de Solis: "You are a kind relation, I expected no less from you; but interest at five per cent. would delay our liberation too long; I will wait till my brother attains his majority, and we will sell his stocks."

Pierquin bit his lips, while Emmanuel smiled to himself.

"Felicie, my dear, take Jean back to school; Mar-

tha will accompany you," said Margaret, pointing to her brother. "Jean, my darling, be a good boy, and do not tear your clothes, we are not rich enough to buy you new ones as often as we have done. Good-bye, study hard."

Felicie went out with her brother.

"Cousin," said Margaret to Pierquin, "and you, M. de Solis, you have no doubt been to see my father during my absence, and I thank you for this proof of friendship. You will do no less, I feel sure, for two poor girls in want of advice; but let us understand each other on that subject. When I am at home, I shall always receive you with the greatest pleasure; but when Felicie is left alone with Martha and Josette, I need not tell you she will see nobody, not even an old friend, or the most devoted of our relatives. Under the circumstances in which we are placed, our conduct must be irreproachably circumspect. Here we are, then, for a long time given over to labor and solitude."

Silence prevailed for several minutes. Emmanuel, absorbed in the contemplation of Margaret's face, seemed dumb. Pierquin did not know what to say, and took leave of his cousin, feeling heartily angry with himself; he plainly perceived that Margaret loved Emmanuel, and that he had behaved like a fool.

"Ah! ah! friend Pierquin," he said, apostrophizing himself in the street; "the man who should call you a beast would not be far out. How could I be

so stupid? I have an income of twelve thousand francs, besides my place, without reckoning what I shall get from my uncle Des Racquets, whose sole heir I am, and who will double my fortune some day or other; but I don't wish him to die, he spends my money sparingly. And, with all this, I had the meanness to demand interest of Mademoiselle Claes. I am sure the two are laughing at me at this very moment. I must think no more of Margaret, that's plain! No! But, after all, Felicie is a sweet and good little creature, who will suit me much better. Margaret has a will of iron; she would wish to domineer over me, ay, and she would domineer over me! Come! come! let me be a little generous, don't let me be so much of the notary. Can't I shake off the harness? Satchel that I am! Well, I will set about loving Felicie, and from that I won't budge. You bungler; she will have a farm of four hundred and thirty acres, which, in a given time, will be worth from fifteen to twenty thousand francs a year, for the land of Waignies is good. Let my uncle Des Racquets die, poor old boy, and I'll sell my notaryship and become a man of fifty thousand francs a year. My wife is a Claes. I am allied to families of position. Then we'll see if the Courtevilles, the Magalhens, the Savarons de Savarus will refuse to visit a Pierquin-Claes-Molina-Nourho! I will be mayor of Douay, I will have the cross of the Legion of Honor, I may be deputy, I'll get all I want. Ah! ah! Pierquin, my boy; stick to that,

no more fool's tricks; and this all the more, because, by my word of honor, Felicie, Mademoiselle Felicie Van Claes, looks on you with favor."

When the two lovers were left alone, Emmanuel held out his hand to Margaret, who did not hesitate to place her right hand in it. They both rose by a spontaneous movement, and were directing their steps towards the bench in the garden; but in the middle of the parlor, the lover could not contain his joy, and, in a voice which emotion rendered tremulous, said to Margaret:

"I have three hundred thousand francs of yours!"

"How so?" she cried; "did my poor mother entrust still more to you?"

"Oh, Margaret, is not all that is mine yours? Was it not you who first said *we?*"

"Dear Emmanuel!" she said, pressing the hand she still held; and instead of going into the garden, she sank into a chair.

"Is it not for me to thank you," he replied in his loving voice, "since you accept it?"

"This moment, my dearly beloved, effaces the remembrance of many a sorrow, and brings a happy future nearer! Yes, I accept your fortune," she continued, an angelic smile playing upon her lips; "for I know the means of making it mine."

She looked at the portrait of Van Claes, as if appealing to him as a witness. The young man, who followed Margaret's eyes, did not perceive her take from her finger a maiden's ring, nor did he notice

her gesture till he heard these words: "Amidst all our profound miseries, one joy springs up. My father, in his abstraction, leaves me the free disposal of myself," she said, holding out the ring; "take it, Emmanuel! My mother loved you; she would have chosen you."

Tears rose to Emmanuel's eyes. He became pale, and sank on his knees before Margaret, holding out a ring which he always wore.

"Here is my mother's wedding-ring, Margaret," he replied, kissing the ring; "can I offer a better pledge than that?"

She stooped to present her brow to Emmanuel's lips.

"Alas! my beloved, are we not doing wrong?" she said, much moved, "for we shall have to wait a long time."

"My uncle, speaking of the Christian who loves God, said that adoration was the daily bread of patience. I can love you so. I have long confounded you with the Lord of all things; I am yours, as I am His."

They remained for some moments abandoned to the sweetest emotions. It was the sincere and calm effusion of a sentiment which, like a too full spring, overflowed in incessant little waves. The circumstances which separated these two lovers were a subject of melancholy which rendered their happiness more lively by giving it something acute, like pain. Felicie returned too soon for them. Emman-

uel, enlightened by the delightful tact which makes love so instinctive, left the two sisters together, after exchanging with Margaret a look in which she might see how much this piece of discretion cost him, for it told how covetous he was of that long-desired happiness which had just been consecrated by the betrothal of their hearts.

"Come with me, sister," said Margaret, putting her arm round Felicie's neck, and leading her into the garden; here they sat down upon the bench where every succeeding generation had breathed out its words of love, its sighs of grief, its meditations and its plans. In spite of the cheerful tone and the amiable cunning of her sister's smile, Felicie felt an emotion not far removed from fear. As Margaret took her hand, she felt that it trembled.

"Mademoiselle Felicie," she said, speaking in her sister's ear, "I can read in that little heart of yours. Pierquin has been here often during my absence; he has been here every evening; he has said pretty, soft things to you,—ay, and you have listened to them!"

Felicie blushed.

"Do not deny it, my angel," said Margaret, "it is so natural to love! Perhaps your good heart will change the nature of our cousin a little; he is egotistical, he is selfish, but he is a good sort of man, and, no doubt, his very faults will contribute to your happiness. He will love you as the prettiest part of his property; you will constitute a part of his business.

Pardon the expression, dear love, but you will correct him of the bad habit he has contracted of considering self-interest in everything, by initiating him into the affairs of the heart."

Felicie could only kiss her sister.

"Besides," continued Margaret, "he has a fortune. His family is one of the highest and most ancient of the bourgeoisie. Do you think that I would oppose your happiness if you seek it in a middle station in life?"

Felicie stammered out, "Dear sister!"

"Oh! yes, you may tell me everything," said Margaret; "what can be more natural than for us to tell each other our secrets?"

This kindly expression led to one of those delicious chats in which young girls tell each other everything.

When Margaret, whom love had rendered expert, had fathomed Felicie's heart, she ended by saying: "Well, my dear child, let us find out if your cousin really loves you; and then—"

"Oh, leave that to me," replied Felicie, laughing, "I have my models before me!"

"Crazy girl!" said Margaret, kissing her on her forehead.

Although Pierquin belonged to that class of men who see, in marriage, certain obligations, the execution of social laws, and a means for the transmission of property; although it was indifferent to him whether he married Felicie or Margaret, if both bore

the same name and had the same dowry, he, nevertheless, perceived that they were both, according to one of his expressions, *romantic and sentimental girls*, two adjectives which heartless people employ to ridicule gifts which nature sows with parsimonious hand in the furrows of humanity. The notary doubtless said to himself: "When at Rome we must do as the Romans do," and went the next day to see Margaret. He led her mysteriously into the little garden, and began at once to talk sentiment, as that was one of the clauses of the primitive contract, which preceded, in the laws of the world, the notarial contract.

"My dear cousin," he said, "we have not always been of the same opinion in regard to the means to be taken to arrive at a happy settlement of your affairs; but you must acknowledge that I have always been guided by an earnest desire to be useful to you. Well, yesterday I spoiled my offers by a fatal habit given me by the *notary spirit*—do you understand? My heart was not the accomplice of my stupidity. I loved you dearly, but we notaries have a certain perspicacity, and I soon perceived I was not agreeable to you. It is my fault! Another has been more skilful than I. Well! I have come to confess openly and above-board, that I cherish a sincere affection for your sister Felicie. Treat me as a brother, use my purse, take what you require! The more you take, the more friendship you will show me. I am entirely yours, *without interest*, please to

observe, either at twelve or at a quarter per cent. Let me be thought worthy of Felicie, and I shall be content. Pardon my errors, they arise from business habits; my heart is good, and I would throw myself into the Scarpe rather than not make my wife happy."

"That is all very well, cousin," said Margaret; "but my sister depends upon herself and our father."

"I know that, my dear cousin," returned the notary; "but you are the mother of the whole family, and I have nothing more at heart than to make you the judge of *mine*."

This style of speaking gives a sufficiently clear idea of the wit of the honest notary. At a later period, Pierquin became celebrated for his reply to the commandant of the camp of Saint Omer, who had requested his presence at a military fete, and which was thus conceived: "*Monsieur Pierquin-Claes de Molina-Nourho, Mayor of the city of Douay, Knight of the Legion of* HONOR, *will have* THAT *of accepting, etc.*"

Margaret accepted the notary's assistance, but only in what concerned his profession, so that she might not compromise either her womanly dignity, the future of her sister, or the decision of her father. That same day she confided her sister to the care of Martha and Josette, who devoted themselves, body and soul, to their young mistress, by aiding her in all her economical plans.

Margaret set out immediately for Waignies, where she commenced her operations, which were ably

directed by Pierquin. Zeal had been figured out in the notary's mind as an excellent speculation; his cares, his labors, were, in a manner, investments he was unwilling to spare. In the first place he sought to save Margaret the trouble of clearing and ploughing the lands that were intended for the farms. He found out three sons of rich farmers who wished to establish themselves; he seduced them by the promise the richness of the lands held out to them, and succeeded in making them take the three farms that were to he constructed upon a lease. In consideration of the abandonment of rent for three years, the farmers agreed to pay ten thousand francs rent the fourth year, twelve thousand the sixth, and fifteen thousand during the remainder of the lease; to dig the drains, lay out the plantations, and purchase the cattle.

Whilst the farms were being built, the farmers came to clear the lands. Four years after Balthazar's departure, Margaret had already nearly redeemed the fortune of her brother and sister. Two hundred thousand francs sufficed for all the buildings. Neither help nor advice were withheld from this courageous girl, whose conduct excited the admiration of the whole city. Margaret overlooked the buildings, and the execution of the agreements and leases, with that good sense, that activity, that constancy, which women know how to display when they are animated by a lofty sentiment.

In the fifth year, she was able to devote thirty

thousand francs of the rent yielded by the farms, by the dividends of her brother, and by the proceeds of her father's property, to the extinction of mortgages, and to repairs of the injuries which Balthazar's passion had done to the house. The redemption of the debts would from that time go on rapidly, from the diminution of the interest. Emmanuel de Solis offered Margaret, too, the hundred thousand francs left of his uncle's property, which she had not employed, adding to them twenty thousand francs of his own savings, so that in the third year of her administration she was able to discharge a considerable amount of debts. This life of courage, privations and zeal, was not relaxed for five years; but all went on fortunately and successfully under the administration and influence of Margaret.

Gabriel, who, through the influence of his grand-uncle, had become an engineer in the department of Roads and Bridges, made a rapid fortune in a canal he was constructing; and made himself agreeable to his cousin, Mademoiselle Conyncks, whom her father adored, and who was one of the richest heiresses in the two Flanders. In 1824, the Claes property was free, and the house in the rue de Paris had repaired its losses. Pierquin now formally demanded Felicie's hand of Balthazar, as did M. de Solis that of Margaret.

Early in the month of January, 1825, Margaret and M. Conyncks set out to bring the exiled father back. His return was anxiously desired by all, and

he had given in his resignation in order to reside in the midst of his family, whose happiness was about to receive his sanction. In the absence of Margaret, who had often expressed regret at not being able to fill the empty frames of the gallery and the reception-rooms against the day when her father should regain possession of his house, Pierquin and M. de Solis formed a plan with Felicie to prepare a surprise for Margaret,—a plan which should make the younger sister, in some sort, contribute to the restoration of the family mansion.

Both had purchased several beautiful pictures, and they offered them to her for the decoration of the gallery. M. Conyncks had had the same idea. Wishing to prove to Margaret the satisfaction her noble conduct and her zeal in carrying out the mission bequeathed to her by her mother gave him, he had taken measures to have fifty of his finest pictures, and some of those which Balthazar had lately sold, brought to Douay, so that the Claes gallery was completely refurnished.

Margaret had been several times to see her father, accompanied by her sister or Jean; on each occasion she had found him more and more changed; but, on her last visit, old age had begun to manifest itself in Balthazar by alarming symptoms, augmented, no doubt, by the parsimony with which he lived, that he might employ the greater part of his salary in making experiments which always deceived his hopes. Although only sixty-five years old, he

looked eighty. His eyes were deeply buried in their sockets; his eyebrows were white, and a few scattered hairs thinly covered the back of his head; he allowed his beard to grow, and cut it with scissors when it annoyed him; he was bent like an old vine-dresser, and the untidiness of his attire had resumed a character of want which decrepitude rendered hideous.

Although strong thoughts still animated that grand countenance, the features of which were no longer to be traced beneath the wrinkles, yet the fixity of his look, an air of despair, a constant uneasiness, stamped it with the diagnostics of madness, or rather of all kinds of madness together. Sometimes there shone upon it a hope which gave Balthazar the expression of a monomaniac; sometimes impatience at not being able to divine a secret which presented itself to him like a will-o'-the-wisp, gave it the symptoms of fury; then, all at once, a burst of laughter betrayed actual lunacy, whilst the greater part of the time the most complete depression summed up all the shades of passion in the dull melancholy of the idiot.

However fugitive and imperceptible these expressions might be for strangers, they were, unfortunately, too evident for those who had known a Claes sublime in goodness, great in heart, handsome of countenance, and of whom nothing existed but now and then a vestige. Grown old, and worn out by continual labor, like his master, Lemulquinier had

not had, like Balthazar, to support the fatigues of thought; so his countenance presented a singular mixture of uneasiness and of admiration for his master, which it was easy to mistake. Though he listened to his least word with respect, and followed his movements with a sort of tenderness, he took the same sort of care of the savant that a mother takes of her child; he often had the appearance of protecting him, because he really did protect him in the vulgar necessities of life, of which Balthazar never took the least heed.

These two old men, absorbed in one idea, confiding in the reality of their hopes, agitated by the same breath—the one representing the envelope and the other the soul of their common existence—formed a spectacle at once horrible and affecting. When Margaret and M. Conyncks arrived, they found Balthazar established at an inn; his successor had not kept him waiting, and had already taken possession of the place.

Amidst the preoccupations of science, a longing to revisit his home, his house and his family, agitated Balthazar. His daughter's letters told him that things had gone well: he dreamed of crowning his career by a series of experiments which would lead him at length to the solution of his problem; he, therefore, awaited the coming of Margaret with excessive impatience. She threw herself into her father's arms weeping with joy. This time she came to seek the recompense of a painful life, and a

pardon for her domestic glory. She felt herself criminal after the manner of great men who violate liberty to save their country. But when she contemplated her father, she shuddered at the changes that had taken place in him since her last visit. Conyncks shared the secret alarm of his niece, and insisted upon removing his cousin to Douay as soon as possible, where the influence of home might restore him to reason and health.

After the first effusions of feeling, which were more lively on the part of Balthazar than Margaret expected, he paid her certain very singular attentions; he expressed regret at receiving her in the mean apartment of an inn, he made inquiries about her tastes, and asked what refreshment she would take, with all the fond assiduity of a lover; his behavior, in short, was that of a criminal anxious to propitiate his judge. Margaret knew her father so well that she divined the motive of this tenderness, by supposing he might have some small debts in the city which he wished to pay before his departure. She observed her father for some time, and saw the human heart laid bare. Balthazar was morally shrunken. The consciousness of his abasement, the isolation in which science left him, had rendered him timid and childish in all questions foreign to his favorite occupations; his eldest daughter exerted authority over him; the remembrance of her past zeal, of the strength she had displayed, the consciousness of the power he had allowed her to take, the

fortune of which she was mistress, and the undefinable feelings which had possessed him from the day he had abdicated his already compromised paternity, had made her appear greater to him daily.

Conyncks was nothing in Balthazar's eyes; he saw nothing but his daughter, and thought only of her whilst appearing to dread her, as certain husbands stand in awe of the superior women who have subjugated them. When he raised his eyes towards her, Margaret saw, with regret, an expression of fear, resembling that of a child who knows he is in fault. The noble girl was unable to reconcile the majestic and terrible expression of that bald head, devastated by science and labor, with the puerile smile, the obsequious servility on Balthazar's lips and physiognomy. She felt wounded by the contrast this grandeur and this littleness presented, and resolved to use all her influence to enable her father to recover his lost dignity, against the solemn day when he should again appear in the bosom of his family. She seized the first moment when they were alone to whisper in his ear: "Do you owe anything here?"

Balthazar colored, and replied with an embarrassed air: "I don't know, but Lemulquinier will tell you. The good fellow is better acquainted with my affairs than I am myself."

Margaret rung for the valet, and when he came, she almost involuntarily studied the countenances of the two old men.

"Do you want anything, sir?" asked Lemulquinier.

Margaret, who was all pride and nobility, felt her heart contract as she noticed, by the tone and manner of the valet, that some improper familiarity existed between her father and the companion of his labors.

"My father cannot, without your assistance, give me an account of what he owes here," said Margaret.

"Master," replied Lemulquinier, "owes—"

At these words, Balthazar gave the valet a sign of intelligence, which Margaret saw, and which humiliated her.

"Tell me all my father owes!" she cried.

"Master owes three thousand francs to an apothecary who sells groceries at wholesale, and who has furnished us with caustic, potash, lead, zinc and resolvents."

"Is that all?" said Margaret.

Balthazar made another affirmative sign to Lemulquinier, who, fascinated by his master, replied: "Y—e—s, mademoiselle."

"Very well," she said; "I will give you the amount."

Balthazar embraced his daughter, joyfully exclaiming, "You are an angel, my child!"

And he breathed more freely, looking at her with a less melancholy eye; but, notwithstanding this joy, Margaret easily perceived a profound anxiety upon his countenance, and guessed that these three thous-

and francs only constituted the more clamorous debts of the laboratory.

"Be candid, my dear father," she said, allowing him to place her on his knee. "Do you owe more? Tell me all; return home without having a cause for fear, amid the general joy."

"My dear Margaret," he said, taking her hands and kissing them with a grace which appeared to be a vestige of his youth, "you will scold me—"

"No," she said.

"Truly?" he replied, allowing a gesture of childish joy to escape him. "I will tell you all, then; will you pay—"

"Yes," she answered, endeavoring to repress the tears which rose to her eyes.

"Well, I owe—oh! I dare not—"

"Come, tell me, father!"

"It's a good deal."

She clasped her hands with an expression of despair.

"I owe Protez and Chiffreville thirty thousand francs."

"Thirty thousand francs," she returned, "is the amount of my savings; but I take pleasure in offering them to you," she added, kissing his brow respectfully.

He rose from his seat, took his daughter in his arms, and went all round the chamber, tossing her up like a child; then he sank upon his chair again, crying: "My dear child, you are a treasure of love!

I was hardly alive. The Chiffrevilles have written me three threatening letters, and were going to proceed against me—me, who have made their fortune for them."

"My dear father," said Margaret, with an accent of despair, "are you still at work, seeking—"

"Still at work!" he replied, with the smile of insanity. "Ay, and I shall find, you will see. If you knew where we are!"

"Whom do you mean by *we?*"

"Oh, I am speaking of Lemulquinier; he understands me at last; he is very fond of me. Poor fellow! he is so devoted!"

The entrance of Conyncks interrupted the conversation. Margaret made her father a sign to be silent, fearing that he might lower himself in the eyes of their uncle. She was terrified at the ravages concentration in one idea had made in that grand intelligence, absorbed in the search of a problem that was perhaps insolvable. Balthazar, who doubtless saw nothing beyond his furnaces, had no idea of the liberation of his fortune.

The next day they set out for Flanders. The journey was long enough to allow Margaret to acquire confused hints upon the situation of her father and Lemulquinier. Had the valet obtained that ascendency over his master which uneducated people are capable of assuming over lofty intellects, when they feel themselves necessary, and when, from concession to concession, they proceed steadily

on towards domination, with the persistency which arises from a fixed idea? Or else, had the master contracted that affection for the valet which springs from habit, like that which a workman entertains for his creating tool, or an Arab for his liberating courser? Margaret studied into several matters, by which to decide, proposing to withdraw her father from the humiliating yoke, if it were real.

As she passed through Paris, she remained a few days to discharge her father's debts, and to beg the manufacturers of chemical products and instruments not to send anything more to Douay without giving her notice of what Claes wanted. She prevailed upon her father to change his dress and resume the habits, in matters of costume, proper in a man of his rank. This external restoration gave Balthazar a sort of physical dignity which augured well for a change of ideas; and, as soon as possible, the daughter, happy, in anticipation, in the surprises which awaited her father in his old home, set out for Douay.

Three leagues from that city, Balthazar was met by his daughter Felicie, on horseback, escorted by her two brothers, Emmanuel, Pierquin, and the intimate friends of the three families. The journey had necessarily diverted the chemist from his habitual thoughts, the sight of Flanders had acted upon his heart; so that when he perceived the joyous troop formed by his family and friends, he experienced emotions so lively that his eyes filled with tears, his voice trembled, his eyelids reddened, and

he embraced his children so passionately and was so loath to leave them, that the spectators of the scene were moved to tears.

As soon as he saw his house again, he became very pale; he sprang out of the carriage with the agility of a young man; he seemed to inhale the air of the court with delight, and surveyed all the details with a pleasure which every gesture betrayed; he drew his tall person up, and his countenance looked young again. When he entered the parlor, the tears came into his eyes as he saw, by the exactness with which his daughter had replaced the ancient silver candle sticks he had sold, that their disasters were entirely repaired.

A splendid breakfast was served in the dining-room, the shelves of which had been refilled with curiosities and plate, of a value at least equal to that of the articles formerly there. Although this family meal lasted a long time, it was scarcely sufficient for the narratives Balthazar required every one of his children to give. The shock communicated to his mind by this return caused him to take the greatest interest in the happiness of his family; and he showed himself their father. He resumed the grandeur of his former manners. In the first moments he gave himself up to the joy of possession, without asking himself by what means he had recovered what he had lost. His joy, therefore, was entire and full.

The breakfast over, the four children, the father,

de Solis and Pierquin passed into the parlor, where Balthazar saw, and not without uneasiness, a pile of stamped papers which a clerk had laid upon a table before which he stood, as if ready to assist his master. The children sat down, whilst Balthazar, in a state of astonishment, remained standing before the chimney-piece.

"This," said Pierquin, "is M. Claes' account of his guardianship of his children. Although it may not be very amusing," he added, laughing after the fashion of notaries, who generally assume a jesting tone when speaking of the most serious matters, "you must absolutely listen to it."

Although circumstances justified this speech, Claes, whose conscience reminded him of his past life, took it as a reproach, and a frown contracted his brow. The clerk commenced reading. The astonishment of Balthazar went on increasing as the document proceeded. In the first place, it was there shown that the fortune of his wife amounted, at the moment of her decease, to about sixteen hundred thousand francs, and the conclusion of the account gave each of his children a clear entire share, as the administration of a good and careful father would have done. It resulted from this that the house was free from mortgage, that Balthazar was in his own home, and that his rural property was equally unencumbered. When the various deeds were signed, Pierquin presented the receipts for the sums formerly borrowed, and the releases of the bonds which had

burthened the property. At this moment, Balthazar, who recovered at once the honor of the man, the life of the father and the consideration of the citizen, sank into a chair, and looked round for Margaret, who, from one of the sublime delicacies of woman's nature, had stolen away from the scene on the pretext of looking after the preparations for the fete.

Every member of the family comprehended the thoughts of the old man at the moment when his moist eyes feebly demanded his daughter, whom all beheld, with the vision of the soul, as an angel of strength and light. Gabriel went to look for Margaret. On hearing his daughter's step, Balthazar ran to clasp her in his arms.

"Father," she said, at the foot of the stairs where the old man had met her, "let me implore you not to diminish your sacred authority. Thank me before all the family for having carried out your intentions satisfactorily, and be thus the sole author of any good that may have been effected."

Balthazar raised his eyes to heaven, looked at his daughter, crossed his arms, and said, after a pause, during which his face resumed an expression which his children had not seen for ten years: "Why are you not here, Pepita, to love and admire your child!" He pressed Margaret closely to his heart, without being able to utter another word, and returned to the parlor. "My children," he said, with that nobleness of bearing which had formerly made him one of the most imposing of men, "we all owe thanks

and gratitude to my daughter Margaret for the wisdom and courage with which she has carried out my intentions and executed my plans, when, too much absorbed by my scientific labors, I placed in her hands the reins of our domestic administration."

"Well, we will now read the marriage contracts," said Pierquin, looking at his watch. "But I cannot meddle with these documents, as the law forbids me to draw them up for my relations or myself; my uncle Raparlier will be here directly."

At this moment the friends of the family invited to the dinner given to celebrate the return of M. Claes and the signing of the contracts, began to arrive, whilst the servants brought in the wedding presents. The party quickly increased, and became as imposing in the quality of the persons, as it was splendid in the richness of the toilettes. The three families united by the happiness of their children, rivaled each other in splendor.

In a few minutes the parlor was filled with the tasteful presents offered to the happy couples. Gold flowed and sparkled; rich stuffs unfolded, Cashmere shawls, necklaces and bracelets excited so much delight in those who received and those who gave, half-childish joy was so clearly painted on every face, that the value of these magnificent presents was forgotten even by the indifferent, who are too frequently occupied in calculating it from curiosity.

The ceremony usual in the Claes family for these solemnities now commenced. It was the custom for

the father and mother only to be seated, whilst the rest of the assembly remained standing at a distance in front of them. At the left of the parlor, on the garden side, were Gabriel and Mademoiselle de Conyncks; near them, M. de Solis and Margaret, her sister and Pierquin. At a few paces from the three couples, Balthazar and Conyncks, the only persons who were seated, took their places, each in an arm-chair, near the notary who had replaced Pierquin. Jean stood behind his father. Twenty ladies, elegantly dressed, and several gentlemen chosen from among the nearest relations of the Pierquins, the Conyncks, and the Claeses; the mayor of Douay, who was to marry the parties; the twelve witnesses, taken from among the most intimate friends of the three families, and of whom the chief justice of the royal court was one—all, even to the curate of Saint Peter's, remained standing, and formed, on the court side, an imposing circle. This homage rendered by all the assembly to the paternal character, which at this instant beamed with royal majesty, gave an antique cast to the scene. It was the only moment for sixteen years in which Balthazar forgot the search for the Absolute.

M. Raparlier, the notary, asked Margaret and her sister if all the persons invited to witness the ceremony and to the dinner, had arrived; and upon their reply in the affirmative, he returned and took up the marriage contract of Margaret and M. de Solis, which was the first to be read, when all at once, the

door of the parlor was thrown open, and Lemulquinier appeared, with a face radiant with joy.

"Master! Master!"

Balthazar cast a despairing look at Margaret, made her a sign, and led her into the garden.

"I did not dare to tell you, my child," said the father to the daughter; "but since you have done so much for me, you will save me from this last misfortune. Lemulquinier lent me, for a final experiment which did not succeed, twenty thousand francs, the result of his savings. The wretch has doubtless come to claim them, on learning that I have become rich again; give them to him at once. Ah, my angel! you owe your father to his care, for he alone consoled me in my troubles; he alone has faith in me yet. Certainly, but for him I should be dead."

"Master! Master!" shouted Lemulquinier.

"Well!" said Balthazar, turning round.

"A diamond!"

Claes sprang into the parlor on perceiving a diamond in the hands of his valet, who said in a low voice:

"I have been to the laboratory."

The chemist, who had forgotten everything, cast a look upon the old Fleming, and this look could only be translated by the words, *So you have been to the laboratory before me!*

"And I found," continued the valet, "this diamond in the evaporating-dish which communicated with the pile which we left to do as it liked, and see what

it has done, sir," and he exhibited a white diamond of an octahedral shape, whose brilliancy attracted the astonished looks of the assembly.

"My children, my friends!" said Balthazar, "pardon my old servant, pardon me! This will drive me mad! A chance of seven years has produced, without me, a discovery which I sought for during sixteen years. How, I cannot say. I left some sulphurate of carbon under the influence of a voltaic pile, the action of which ought to have been watched every day. Well, during my absence, the power of God has burst forth in my laboratory, without my being there to witness its progressive effects! Is not that frightful? Cursed exile! Cursed chance! Alas! if I had watched this long, this slow, this sudden, I do not know what to call it, whether crystalization or transformation,—in short, this miracle—well, my children would be richer than they are. Although it is not the solution of the problem I am seeking for, at least the first rays of my glory would have shone upon my country, and this moment, which our satisfied affections render so glowing with happiness, would have been rendered still warmer by the sun of science."

Every one preserved silence in the presence of this man. The incoherent words thus drawn from him by grief were too genuine not to be sublime.

All at once, Balthazar drove back his despair to the bottom of his heart, cast upon the assembly a majestic glance which penetrated to their souls, took

the diamond and presented it to Margaret, saying: "It belongs to you, my angel!" He then dismissed Lemulquinier with a wave of the hand, and turning to the notary: said, "Go on!"

This speech excited in the guests that sort of shudder which, in certain parts, Talma called forth among the attentive throngs that flocked to hear him.

Balthazar seated himself, saying, in a low voice: "I must be nothing but a father to-day!" Margaret heard it, advanced, seized his hand, and kissed it respectfully.

"Never was there a man so great!" said Emmanuel, as his bride rejoined him; "never was man so self-contained! any other would have gone mad!"

The three contracts being read and signed, every one flocked round Balthazar to inquire in what manner the diamond had been produced, but he could give them no account of so strange an incident. He looked at his laboratory, and pointed to it with an expression of rage.

"Yes, the fearful power due to the commotion of inflamed matter which, no doubt, makes metals and diamonds," he said, "manifested itself for an instant by chance."

"That chance is, doubtless, very natural," said one of those people who think they can explain everything. "The worthy man left some real diamond in the vessel; it is one saved out of the number he has burned."

"Let us forget it," said Balthazar to his friends; "I beg you not to say anything about it to-day."

Margaret took her father's arm to lead him into the front house, where a sumptuous banquet awaited them. When he entered the gallery after all his guests, he found it furnished with pictures, and filled with beautiful and rare flowers.

"Pictures!" cried he, "pictures! and some of our old ones, too!"

He stopped, his brow became cloudy; a shade of sadness passed over him; he felt the weight of his faults by measuring the extent of his secret humiliation.

"All this is yours, father," said Margaret, divining the feelings which agitated Balthazar's soul.

"Angel whom celestial spirits might applaud," cried he, "how many times have you redeemed your father's life?"

"Dismiss this cloud from your brow, and do not entertain the least thought of sadness in your heart," she replied, "and you will recompense me beyond my hopes. I have just been thinking of Lemulquinier, dear father. The few words you said in regard to him, make me esteem him; and I confess I had formed a wrong opinion of him. Think no more about what you owe him, he shall remain with you as an humble friend. Emmanuel has saved about sixty thousand francs; we will give them to Lemulquinier. After having served you so well, he ought to be at his ease for the rest of his days. Do

not trouble yourself about us. M. de Solis and I shall have a calm and pleasant life,—a life without pomp; we can, therefore, do without this sum till you are able to return it to us."

"Ah, my daughter, do not abandon me! Be still the good genius of your father."

On entering the reception-rooms, Balthazar found them restored and furnished as magnificently as they had formerly been. The guests soon repaired to the great dining-room, on the ground floor, by the grand staircase, every step of which was adorned with flowering shrubs. Silver plate of elegant form, Gabriel's present to his father, attracted great attention, as did the luxury of the table, which appeared extraordinary even to the principal inhabitants of a city where such luxury is traditionally the fashion. The servants of M. Conyncks and of Pierquin assisted the Claes' household as attendants at this sumptuous repast.

On finding himself at the head of the table, surrounded by relations, friends, and faces beaming with lively and sincere joy, Balthazar, with Lemulquinier behind him, evinced an emotion so contagious, that every one was silent, as people become silent in the presence of great joys or great sorrows.

"Beloved children," he cried, "you have killed the fatted calf on the return of the prodigal father."

This speech, by which the savant did himself justice, and which, perhaps, prevented his being judged more severely, was pronounced so nobly,

that every one was affected to tears; but this was the last expression of melancholy, as joy gradually assumed the animated character which distinguishes family festivals.

After dinner, the principal inhabitants of the city came to the just opening ball, which responded to the classic splendor of the restored House of Claes. The three marriages were celebrated shortly after, and gave occasion to fetes, balls and entertainments which, for several months, drew old Claes into the vortex of the world. His eldest son went to settle on an estate of M. Conyncks', near Cambrai, the father being unwilling to be separated from his daughter. Madame Pierquin was also obliged to quit the paternal roof, to do the honors of the hotel Pierquin had built, where he wished to live in handsome style; for he had sold his notaryship, and his uncle Des Racquets, who had died recently, had left him his slowly accumulated wealth. Jean set out for Paris, where he was to finish his education.

The de Solis were thus left alone with their father, who gave them the back quarter of the house, inhabiting himself a second story of the front. Margaret continued to watch over her father's external comforts, and was greatly assisted in this delightful duty by Emmanuel. The noble girl received the most enviable of crowns from the hands of love, one that is woven by felicity and whose beauty is preserved by constancy. In fact, never did a couple better present the image of that complete, avowed, pure

bliss, which all women cherish in their dreams. The union of these two beings, so courageous in the trials of life, and who had loved so holily, excited the respectful admiration of the whole city.

M. de Solis, who had been some time before made inspector-general of the university, resigned his office the better to enjoy his happiness, and to reside at Douay, where every one rendered such homage to his talents and character, that his name was, in advance, proposed for the suffrages of the electoral colleges, when he should be old enough to be sent as deputy to Paris. Margaret, who had shown so strong a character in adversity, became, under the influence of happiness, a gentle and charming woman. As for Claes himself, he was, during the year, certainly very much absorbed, but, though he made several experiments that his income enabled him to pay for, he seemed to neglect his laboratory.

Margaret, who wished to revive the old custom of the Claeses, gave her father, every month, a family fete, at which the Pierquins and the Conyncks were present, and received the high society of the city one evening in each week at a café, which became one of the most celebrated. Claes appeared at all these parties, and became so complacently a man of the world again, to please his eldest daughter, that his children had reason to believe he had renounced seeking a solution of his problem. Three years thus passed away.

In 1828, an event favorable to Emmanuel's inter-

ests called him to Spain. Although, between him and the estates of the house of de Solis, there were three numerous branches, yet yellow fever, old age, failure in offspring, and all the caprices of fortune, conspired to make Emmanuel the last heir to the titles and rich possessions of his house. By one of those chances which are only improbable in books, the house of de Solis had acquired the countship of Nourho. Margaret was not willing to be separated from her husband, who was to remain in Spain as long as his business should require his presence there. She was, besides, curious to see the chateau of Casa Real, where her mother had passed her infancy, and the city of Granada, the patrimonial cradle of the family of de Solis. She set out then, confiding the management of the household to the zeal of Martha, Josette and Lemulquinier, who had managed it so long. Margaret proposed to Balthazar to take him with them to Spain; but he declined, alleging his great age as an excuse. The true ground of his refusal, however, was that he had certain fondly cherished experiments to make, which he flattered himself would realize all his hopes.

The Count and Countess de Solis y Nourho were detained in Spain much longer than they expected. Margaret's first child was born there. About the middle of the year 1830 they arrived at Cadiz, where they intended to embark and return to France through Italy; but they there received a letter from Felicie, conveying sad news to her sister. During

the eighteen months of her absence, her father had again completely ruined himself; Gabriel and Pierquin were obliged to place a monthly stipend in Lemulquinier's hands, to defray the household expenses. The old servant had again sacrificed his little property to his master. Balthazar would not see anybody, not even his children. Josette and Martha were dead. The coachman, the cook, and the other servants had been successively dismissed, and the horses and equipages sold. Although Lemulquinier preserved the most profound silence with regard to his master's mode of living, there was great reason for believing that the thousand francs, given monthly by Gabriel Claes and Pierquin, were spent in experiments.

The small quantity of provisions which Lemulquinier procured at market, led to the supposition that the two old men contented themselves with the merest necessaries. In short, Gabriel and Pierquin had been obliged to pay the interest of sums the old man had borrowed, unknown to them, upon the paternal house, to prevent its being sold. Not one of his children had any influence over this man, who, at the age of seventy, displayed extraordinary energy in attaining the objects of his wishes, even the most absurd. Margaret alone might, perhaps, regain the control she had formerly exercised over Balthazar, and Felicie implored her sister to return as quickly as possible, as she feared her father might have signed more notes of hand. Gabriel Conyncks and

Pierquin, terrified at the continuance of a madness which had already swallowed up about seven millions to no purpose, had determined to pay no more of the debts contracted by Claes.

This letter changed the course of Margaret's intended journey; she immediately took the shortest route to Douay. Her economy and her new fortune enabled her to discharge the debts of her father once more, without difficulty; but she was anxious to do more; she wished to obey her mother, and not allow Balthazar to descend in dishonor to his grave. She felt assured that she alone had the power to exercise an authority over this old man, to prevent his continuing his work of ruin at an age when no productive toil could be expected from his weakened faculties. But she was desirous of controlling him without offending him, that she might not imitate the children of Sophocles, in case her father should approach the scientific object for which he had sacrificed so much.

M. and Madame de Solis reached Flanders towards the close of September, 1831, and arrived at Douay in the morning. Margaret desired to be driven straight to the house, in the rue de Paris, but found it shut up. The bell was violently rung, but no one answered. A tradesman came forward from his shop door, to which the noise of the carriages of M. de Solis and his suite had attracted him. Many persons came to their windows to hail the return of a family so beloved by all the city, attracted still further by a

vague curiosity concerning the events the return of Margaret was likely to bring to light. The shopkeeper told the valet of M. de Solis, that Claes had gone out about an hour before; M. Lemulquinier had doubtless taken his master to walk on the ramparts. Margaret sent for a locksmith to force open the door, to avoid the scene likely to ensue from her father's resistance, if, as Felicie had written, he were to refuse to admit her into the house.

In the mean time Emmanuel went in search of the old man, to announce the arrival of his daughter, whilst his valet hastened to inform M. and Madame Pierquin. The door was opened in a moment. Margaret went into the parlor to show the servants where to place her luggage, and was horror-struck to find the walls as bare as if fire had swept them. The admirable wood-carvings of Van-Huysium and the portrait of the president had been sold, it was said, to Lord Spencer. The dining-room was empty, there being nothing in it but two old rush-bottomed chairs and a common table, upon which Margaret shuddered to see two plates, two bowls, two silver spoons, and the remains of a red herring which Claes and Lemulquinier had, doubtless, just shared between them.

She rushed from one apartment to another, and all presented the same desolate spectacle she had beheld in the parlor and dining-room. The idea of the Absolute had gone through the house like a conflagration. The furniture of her father's room con-

sisted of a bed, a chair and a table, upon which stood a mean brass candle-stick, in the socket of which was the end of a candle of the poorest sort. So completely had this room been stripped, that there was not even a curtain to the windows. Articles of the smallest value, even the kitchen utensils, were sold. Actuated by the curiosity which never abandons us, even in misfortune, Margaret entered Lemulquinier's room, and found it quite as bare as her father's. In a half-open table-drawer she found a pawn-broker's ticket which attested that the valet had pledged his watch a few days before. She ran to the laboratory, and found the room as full of scientific instruments as in times past. Lastly, she caused the door of her own apartment to be opened; here her father had touched nothing!

At the first glance Margaret burst into tears, and freely forgave her father. In the midst of his devastating fury he had been stopped by his feelings as a father, and by the gratitude he owed his daughter! This proof of tenderness, received at a moment when the despair of Margaret was at its height, produced one of those moral reactions against which the coldest hearts are powerless.

She went down to the parlor, and awaited the coming of her father in a state of anxiety which her fears frightfully increased. How was she to find him? Destroyed, decrepit, suffering, weakened by fasts undergone from pride? Would he even be in possession of his reason? Tears filled her eyes,

without her perceiving them, as she looked around on this devastated sanctuary. The image of her whole life, her efforts, her useless precautions, her childhood, her happy and yet unhappy mother, everything, even to the sight of her little Joseph who smiled at this picture of desolation, composed a poem of heart-rending melancholy.

But although she foresaw misfortunes, she did not foresee the end which was to crown the life of her father, a life at once so imposing and so miserable. The condition of M. Claes was a secret to no one. To the shame of humanity, be it said, there were not in Douay two generous hearts to render honor to his perseverance as a man of genius. Throughout society Balthazar was a man to be shunned, a bad father, who had wasted six fortunes, who had consumed millions, and who was seeking for the philosopher's stone in the nineteenth century—that century so enlightened, that incredulous century, that century, etc., etc.; they calumniated him by degrading him with the title of alchemist, by saying, under his very nose, "He wants to make gold!" What eulogies did they not utter of this century, in which, as in all others, talent expires beneath an indifference as brutal as that of the times in which Dante, Cervantes and Tasso died? The people comprehend the creations of genius even more slowly than kings.

These opinions had imperceptibly spread from the upper society of Douay into the bourgeoisie, and from the bourgeoisie into the lower classes. The

septuagenarian chemist excited, therefore, a profound sentiment of pity among well-bred people, a scoffing curiosity in the populace, two expressions big with contempt and with that "Woe to the vanquished!" with which great men are crushed by the masses when they see them unfortunate. Many persons stopped in front of Claes' house to point out the round window of the laboratory, where so much gold and coal had been consumed. When Balthazar passed through the streets he was pointed at with the finger; often, unknown to him, a vulgar jest or an expression of contemptuous pity escaped the lips of a vagabond or a child; but Lemulquinier took care to translate them as expressions of admiration, and was able to deceive him with impunity, for though Balthazar's eyes had preserved that sublime lucidity which the habit of grand thoughts gave them, his sense of hearing was very much weakened.

In the eyes of many of the peasants, of the vulgar and the superstitious, this old man thus became a sorcerer. The noble and grand House of Claes was called in the suburbs and in the country, *the Devil's house.* There was nothing, not excepting the countenance of Lemulquinier, which did not contribute to the ridiculous belief circulated with respect to his master. Thus, when the poor old Helot went to market for the provisions necessary for their subsistence, and which he selected from among the cheapest of all, he obtained nothing without some abuse thrown in; and was happy if some superstitious

sales-woman did not refuse to sell him his meager pittance, out of fear of being damned by contact with an imp of hell.

The feelings of all this great city were thus generally hostile to this grand old man and his companion. The disorder of the dress of both added to this, for they went about clothed like the shame-faced poor, who preserve a decent exterior and hesitate to ask for charity. Sooner or later, it was probable these two old men might be insulted. Pierquin, feeling how disgraceful a public insult would be to the family, always sent two or three people to keep at a distance during his father-in-law's walks to protect him, for the revolution of July had not contributed to render the people respectful.

By one of those fatalities which cannot be explained, Claes and Lemulquinier, who had gone out early in the morning, had escaped the secret watch ordered by M. and Madame Pierquin, and were alone in the city. As they returned from their walk, they sat themselves down in the sun upon a bench in the Place Saint Jacques, through which many children passed on their way to school or college.

On perceiving these two old men at a distance, without defence, and evidently basking in the sun, the boys began to talk about them. Generally boys' talk leads to laughter, and in this case, they went on from laughter to practical jokes without being aware of their cruelty. Seven or eight of those that had

LEMULQUINIER THREATENS THE BOYS WITH HIS CANE.—*See Page* 290.

arrived first, satisfied themselves with examining the two old fellows, restraining their laughter with difficulty; this attracted Lemulquinier's attention.

"Look here," said one, "do you see that man with a head as bald as my knee?"

"Yes."

"Well! he is a savant by birth."

"My father says he makes gold," said another.

"Which way? This way or that way?" asked a third, pointing with a mocking gesture to that part of himself which school-boys so often point at in sign of contempt.

The youngest of the band, who had his basket full of provisions and was eating the butter off from a slice of bread, advanced innocently towards the bench, and said to Lemulquinier: "Is it true, sir, that you make pearls and diamonds?"

"Yes, my brave little fellow," replied Lemulquinier, smiling, patting his cheek, "we will give you some if you mind your book."

"Give me some too! give me some too!" was the general exclamation.

All the boys now surrounded the two chemists like a flock of birds. Balthazar, absorbed in a meditation from which he was roused by their cries, gave a start of astonishment that excited a universal laugh.

"Come, come, boys! be respectful to a great man!" said Lemulquinier.

"Get out, you old humbugs!" cried the boys,

"you are sorcerers! Yes, sorcerers! old sorcerers!"

Lemulquinier sprang up from the bench, and threatened the boys with his cane, while they ran away, picking up stones and mud. A laborer, who was eating his breakfast within a few rods of the bench, having seen Lemulquinier lift his cane to drive away the boys, fancied he had struck them, and came to their assistance with the terrible cry, "Down with the sorcerers!"

The boys, finding themselves supported, threw their projectiles, which hit the old men just as the Count de Solis and Pierquin's servants came in sight; but they did not arrive in time to prevent the boys from covering the old man and his valet with mud. The blow was struck! Balthazar, whose faculties had been preserved up to that period by a chastity natural to savants, with whom the preoccupation of a great discovery annihilates the passions, divined, by a phenomenon of intuition, the secret of this scene. His decrepit frame could not sustain the terrible reaction he experienced in the upper regions of his feelings, and he fell, struck by paralysis, into the arms of Lemulquinier, who carried him home on a litter, surrounded by his two sons-in-law and their servants.

No power could prevent the populace of Douay from following the old man to the door of his house, where Margaret, Felicie, Gabriel and Jean were all standing in anxious expectation. Gabriel, informed

of late events by his sister, had just arrived from Cambrai with his wife. It was a frightful spectacle —this return home of the old man, struggling less with death than with the terror of seeing his children penetrate the secret of his want. A bed was immediately put up in the middle of the parlor, and every attention was lavished upon Balthazar, whose situation, towards the end of the day, allowed hope to be entertained of his recovery. The paralysis, though skilfully combated, left him, nevertheless, for a considerable time in a state bordering on childishness. Though it ceased by degrees, it remained upon his tongue, which it had particularly affected, perhaps because anger had driven thither all the old man's strength at the moment when he wished to apostrophize the boys.

This scene had kindled a general indignation in the city. By a natural law till then unknown, one which directs the affections of the masses, the incident brought back all hearts to M. Claes. In a moment he became a great man, again he excited admiration, and won all the suffrages that had been withheld from him the evening before. Every one lauded his patience, his will, his courage, his genius. The magistrates wished to punish rigorously all who had participated in the offence; but the evil was done, and the Claes family were the first to request that the affair should be forgotten. Margaret ordered the parlor to be refurnished, and its bare walls were soon adored with silken hangings.

When a few days after this event, the old man had recovered his faculties, and found himself in an elegant room, surrounded with everything that was necessary for his comfort, he exclaimed that his daughter Margaret must have returned. At that moment she entered the parlor. On seeing her, Balthazar faintly colored, his eyes became moist, but he shed no tears. He was able to press the hand of his daughter with his cold fingers, and communicate to the pressure all the feelings and all the ideas he was no longer able to utter. There was something holy and solemn in the farewell of the brain which still lived, of the heart reanimated by gratitude. Exhausted by his fruitless attempts, weary of a struggle with a gigantic problem, and perhaps desperate at the idea of the obscurity which would attend his name, this great man was soon about to depart; all his children surrounded him with respectful affection, so that his eyes were refreshed by images of abundance and wealth, and by the affecting spectacle presented by his noble family. He was uniformly affectionate in his looks, and thus manifested his sentiments; his eyes suddenly acquired so great a variety of expression, that they spoke, as it were, a language of light, easy of comprehension.

Margaret paid her father's debts, and in a few days restored the House of Claes to such a degree of modern splendor as would banish every appearance of decay. She did not leave Balthazar's bed-side, and sought to divine his thoughts and anticipate his

slightest wants. Several months thus passed in those alternations for the better or the worst, which, in the old, indicate the struggle of life with death. His children repaired to the parlor, the room which he occupied, stayed there during the day, dining close to his bed, and only left him when he went to sleep. The amusement which pleased him most among those by which they sought to distract him, was the reading of the newspapers, rendered at that period highly interesting by passing political events. Claes listened attentively as Emmanuel de Solis read aloud at his side.

Towards the close of the year 1832, Balthazar passed an extremely critical night. Doctor Pierquin was sent for by the nurse, who was alarmed at a sudden change in the patient. The physician himself thought it best to watch him, as he feared that he might, at any moment, expire in the throes of an internal struggle, the effects of which bore the character of a last agony.

The old man made efforts of incredible energy to shake off the bonds of the paralysis; he tried to speak and moved his tongue about without uttering a sound; his flaming eyes projected his thoughts into the air; his contracted features told of tortures beyond conception; his fingers were convulsively and desperately agitated; he sweated in huge drops. The children kissed their father in the morning with that affection which the fear of his approaching

death caused them to manifest every succeeding day with increasing warmth; but he no longer manifested the satisfaction which these pledges of tenderness usually gave him.

Emmanuel, instructed by Pierquin, hastened to open the newspaper, to endeavor, by reading, to stay the internal spasms which were racking Balthazar's frame. As he spread the paper out, he discovered these words: DISCOVERY OF THE ABSOLUTE, which struck him violently, and he read Margaret an article relative to a law-suit concerning a sale of the Absolute made by a celebrated Polish mathematician. Though Emmanuel read the article in a low voice to Margaret, who had asked him to skip it, Balthazar heard it.

Suddenly the dying man raised himself up on his clenched fists, gazed upon his terrified children with a look which struck them as a thunderbolt would have done; the thin hair upon the back of his head moved weirdly about, his wrinkles worked and quivered, his face became instinct with a spirit of fire; the breath of inspiration passed over his features and made them sublime. He lifted up one hand, clenched in despair, and shrieked in piercing tones Archimedes' famous cry: "EUREKA! I HAVE DISCOVERED IT!" He fell back upon the bed, which returned the dull, heavy sound of an inert, lifeless body. He died uttering a fearful groan, and his agonized eyes expressed, till the physician closed

them, his regret at being unable to bequeath to Science the solution of the problem; but the veil which shrouded it had been too tardily torn from before it by the fleshless fingers of Death!

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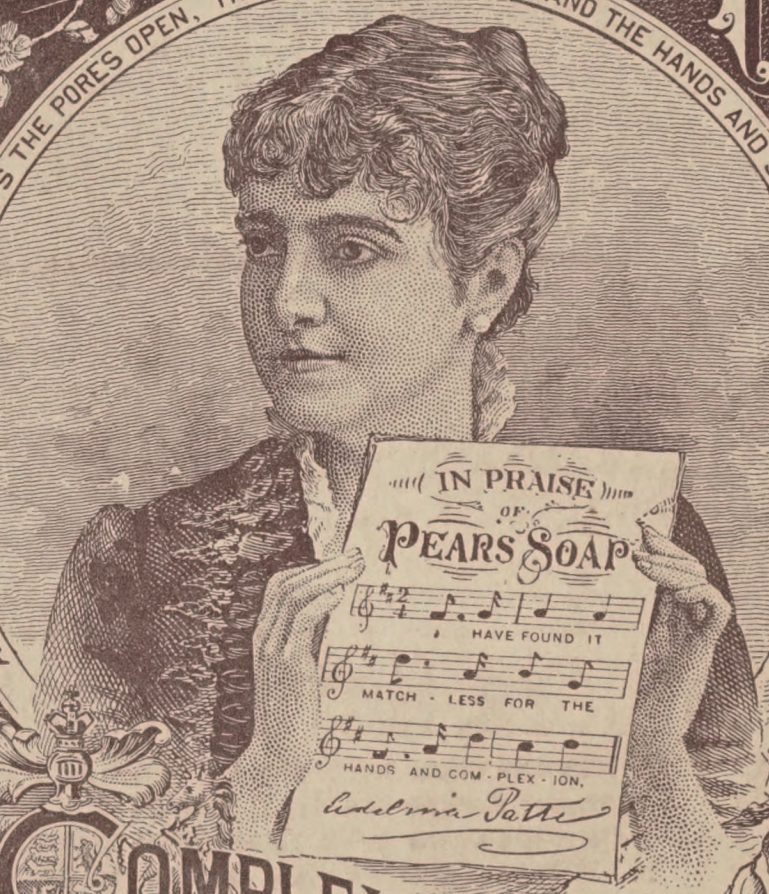
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